

Media and Democratization in Nigeria: State, Capital and Civil Society

by
Arthur-Martins Aginam

B.A. University of Nigeria, 1989
M.A. University of Leeds, 1999

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the
School of Communication
Faculty of Communication, Art and Technology

© **Arthur-Martins Aginam 2010**
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2010

All rights reserved.

However, in accordance with the *Copyright Act of Canada*, this work may be reproduced, without authorization, under the conditions for *Fair Dealing*. Therefore, limited reproduction of this work for the purposes of private study, research, criticism, review and news reporting is likely to be in accordance with the law, particularly if cited appropriately.

APPROVAL

NAME Arthur-Martins Aginam
DEGREE PhD
TITLE OF DISSERTATION: **Media and Democratization in Nigeria: State, Capital and Civil Society**

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

CHAIR: Dr. Robert Hackett, School of Communication

Dr. Yuezi Zhao
Professor
School of Communication

Dr Alison Beale
Professor
School of Communication

Peter Anderson
Associate Professor
School of Communication

Dr. Robert Anderson
Professor
School of Communication

Dr. Paula Chakravartty
Associate Professor
Department of Communication
University of Massachusetts
Amherst, Massachusetts

DATE: December 8, 2010.



SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY

Declaration of Partial Copyright Licence

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection (currently available to the public at the "Institutional Repository" link of the SFU Library website <www.lib.sfu.ca> at: <<http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/handle/1892/112>>) and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

While licensing SFU to permit the above uses, the author retains copyright in the thesis, project or extended essays, including the right to change the work for subsequent purposes, including editing and publishing the work in whole or in part, and licensing other parties, as the author may desire.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Abstract

The dissertation critically examines the still evolving process of neoliberal democratization and its impact on the philosophy and structure of the Nigerian media. The return of civil rule in 1999 following decades of military despotism naturally generated a great deal of expectation regarding the prospects of a more democratic media system that would foster popular participation in development and governance. Well over a decade into the democratic experience, not much has changed as the country's media, particularly the broadcasting sector continue to stagnate under military era policies and legislations that automatically became Acts of parliament. The lack of substantive democratization by way of policies and regulations required of a democratic society is further compounded by the selective application of neoliberal policies relative to the political and economic interests of the ruling elite as evidenced by the contrasting policies in broadcasting and telecommunications in which the former remain largely under the stranglehold of the state and the latter almost fully deregulated. Further, the sustained advocacy of coalitions of civil society groups on a host of issues geared towards a more democratic, participatory and accessible media have thus far failed due to the shenanigans of members of parliament and top government officials who want to maintain the status quo. The apparent democratic deficit of the Nigerian media speaks directly to the limits of her current neoliberal democratization. The study draws from both postcolonial and globalization studies as well as critical political economy to explain the complexity of the Nigerian nation and context of its democratization. And given the widespread government abuse of the media in Nigeria, it identifies with the liberal critique of an overreaching state, but not necessarily its unfettered market prescription. Instead, it endorses a social democratic and plural media system not controlled by a leviathan state or behemoth capital; an inclusive system that goes beyond political and economic elites and the urban middle class to also serve the interests of minority groups and cultures, marginal voices and the often overlooked rural peasant populations.

Keywords: Democratization; neo-liberalism; liberalization; civil society; ethnicity; non-governmental organizations

To mom and dad:
Osodieme and Ezeonyekachi—“Ukpa Ekene”

Acknowledgements

This research project would not have been possible without the assistance of numerous people who helped at various stages of my journey through graduate school. First is my supervisory committee made up of Professors Yuezhi Zhao, Alison Beale, Peter Anderson and Robert Hackett (pre-dissertation phase). Their intellectual mentoring and support over these past years have been most invaluable in my academic development. They are arguably the best committee any graduate student can ask for. I must in particular thank my Senior Supervisor—the brilliant, energetic and ever optimistic Dr. Yuezhi Zhao who literally went beyond the call of duty to ensure that this work came to fruition. Without her devotion and belief, the outcome could have been different and for that I will remain eternally grateful. I can only pray that my academic life will justify her enormous devotion to me.

I am also indebted to several faculty members in the School of Communication, in particular Professors Robert Anderson, Catherine Murray, Rick Gruneau, Alison Beale and Robert Hackett (who taught the engaging graduate courses I was involved early in the program) as well as Professors Pat Howard (rtd), Garry McCarron, Kirsten Mcallister, Zoe Druick, Donald Gutstein, Martin Laba, Joan Marontate and Kathi Cross for their support and encouragement. And to Professor Peter Anderson, words cannot express my gratitude for all your help.

Special thanks also go to my friends and colleagues in the graduate program some of who have since graduated—Fiona Jefferies, Shamshad Khan, Abu Jafar Bhuyian, Robert Prey, Yin-Fen Huang, Imran Munir and his wife, Marc Cote, Supaporn Phokaew, Florence Chee, Darryl Cressman, Manisha and Heiko Decosas, Gioux Xing, Ian Chunn, Daniel Ahadi, Sherry Yu, Liu Caroline, Mirjan Gollmitzer and Robert Hershorn. To the beautiful staff of the School of Communication—Lucie Menkveld, Neena Shehani, Denise Vanderwolf, Brenda Baldwin, Monique Cloutier and Amy Soo—you were all nice to me and I cannot thank you enough. Thanks for the memories.

I am indebted to Dr. James Compton (Faculty of Information and Media Studies, University of Western Ontario) along with his wife Joan and lovely daughter Colleen; Dr. Marc Edge (Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, Sam Houston University, Texas); Sylvia Roberts (SFU Communication Liaison Librarian); Shaheen Nanji, Chris Breedyk and Migo Alphonso (all of SFU International) and Caroline Lush of the Fraser Health Authority—for their encouragement and support over these past years. The meticulous editing and formatting skills of Joan Wolfe was invaluable in producing the final copy and I am very thankful for her assistance and patience. I had hoped to share this with Annie Korner and John Latham, the wonderful couple in whose loving home I stayed in my first two months in Vancouver. Unfortunately, John died in a senseless act of violence in 2006 in the hands of a young man who the couple had shown so much love. His distraught wife has since left town living as a recluse somewhere in the Prairies. Annie, I worry about you every day as you deserve much better than life has dealt you. John will forever remain in my thoughts and I hope to someday reestablish contact with you. Meanwhile, stay strong despite your health and emotional challenges.

During my field research in Nigeria, many journalists, media professionals, bureaucrats and NGO activists took time to discuss their work with me. I am particularly indebted to the following—Dr. Reuben Abati (Chairman, Editorial Board of The Guardian Press), Eluem Emeka Izeze (Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief of The Guardian Press), Dimgba Igwe (Deputy-Editor-in-Chief of The Sun Newspaper), Edetaen Ojo (Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda), Wole Adeoye (Chairman, Journalists for Democratic Rights), Nosa Igiebor (Editor-in-Chief, Tell Magazine), Bayo Onanuga (Managing Director of The News Magazine), Prof. Pat Utomi (Pan-African University, Lagos), Lanre Idowu (Editor-in-Chief of The Media Review), Tom Adaba (Pioneer Director-General, National Broadcasting Commission), Prince Tony Momoh (distinguished journalist, Lawyer and former Minister of Information), Lanre Arogundade (Coordinator, International Press Center, Lagos) and Richard Akinnola (Center for Free Speech).

Finally, special thanks to my immediate and extended family who have had to deal with my long absence. And I feel the pain too. To my siblings—Jane, Okwy, Ogo and Chy along with my brother-in-law Onyii—your love and prayers have kept me going. It has been a challenge but I am confident the worst is behind us. To mom and dad—

Osodieme and Ezeonyekachi—great parents to an undeserving son, for not being around all these years and for still being less able to take care of you in your twilight years, I hope you will find some comfort in knowing that this dissertation is reverently dedicated to you.

Everyone mentioned above has in some way or the other contributed to the realization of this project. However, while they share in its strengths if any, the weaknesses are mine and mine alone.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Approval | ii |
| Abstract | iii |
| Dedication | iv |
| Acknowledgements | v |
| Table of Contents | viii |
| Glossary | x |
| | |
| Chapter 1. Introduction..... | 1 |
| 1.1. Nigeria: Brief Background | 1 |
| 1.2. Media and Democratization: State, Capital and Civil Society: An Overview | 4 |
| 1.3. Research Question, Theoretical Approaches, Scope and Organization of the Study..... | 18 |
| | |
| Chapter 2. State and the Evolution of the Mass Media in Nigeria: From Colonial Times to the Early 1980s | 25 |
| | |
| Chapter 3. State and the Mass Media in the Tortuous Political Transition Years: 1985-1999..... | 56 |
| | |
| Chapter 4. Institutional Frameworks and the Limits of Media Democratization in Post-Military Nigeria | 79 |
| 4.1. The Freedom of Information Bill and the Limits of Media Democratization in Nigeria | 92 |
| | |
| Chapter 5. The Press (Print Media) and Democratization in Nigeria..... | 99 |
| 5.1. Five Typologies of Press and Democratization in Nigeria..... | 99 |
| 5.2. The Rise and Fall of the Government Press | 101 |
| 5.3. Democratization and the Bourgeoning of the Liberal Press | 109 |
| 5.4. Enter the Gadflies: The Advocacy Press and Political Transition | 121 |
| 5.4.1. <i>Tell</i> | 125 |
| 5.4.2. <i>The News</i> | 129 |
| 5.4.3. The Die Was Cast: Advocacy Press and the Military | 131 |
| 5.4.4. Advocacy Press in the Post-Military Dispensation: Which Way? | 140 |
| 5.5. The Tabloid Press | 145 |
| 5.6. Online Citizen Journalism..... | 147 |
| 5.7. Subsisting Constitutional and Legislative Challenges for the Press..... | 148 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Chapter 6. Broadcasting and Democratization: From State Monopoly to Democratic Pluralism? | 151 |
| 6.1. Socio-Political Context of Broadcasting Liberalization | 151 |
| 6.2. National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Institutional Framework for Broadcasting Regulation..... | 155 |
| 6.3. Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Persistence of Government Broadcasting | 161 |
| 6.4. Private Broadcasters: Walking the Straight and Narrow Path..... | 163 |
| 6.5. Community Radio: The Big Elephant in the Room..... | 167 |
| | |
| Chapter 7. Conclusion | 171 |
| 7.1. Media Democratization in Nigeria: Quo Vadis?..... | 171 |
| | |
| References | 174 |

Glossary

| | |
|-------|---------------------------------------|
| BPE | Bureau of Public Enterprises |
| FOI | Freedom of Information (Bill) |
| FRCN | Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria |
| IMF | International Monetary Fund |
| IPC | International Press Center |
| MRA | Media Rights Agenda |
| NBC | Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation |
| NBC | National Broadcasting Commission |
| N CC | Nigerian Communications Commission |
| NGE | Nigerian Guild of Editors |
| NITEL | Nigerian Telecommunications Authority |
| NPC | Nigerian Press Council |
| NPO | Nigerian Press Organization |
| NUJ | Nigerian Union of Journalists |
| NTA | Nigerian Television Authority |
| PDP | Peoples Democratic Party |
| SAP | Structural Adjustment Program |

Map of Nigeria



Source. Adapted from Africa.com (n.d.).

Chapter 1.

Introduction

1.1. Nigeria: Brief Background

Nigeria with an estimated 151 million people is black Africa's most populous nation. It occupies an area of about 923,768 sq km (356,700 sq miles) and is one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the continent with over 250 ethno-linguistic groups (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2010). The Igbo in the East, Yoruba in the West and Hausa-Fulani in the North constitute the three major ethnic groups on the basis of which the original three regions were created leading up to independence in 1960. The three major ethnic groups make up about 58% of the population (Hausa-Fulani 21%, Yoruba 20%, and Igbo 17%). Many of the ethnic groups date back to prehistoric times. As a former British colony, English is the official language although Pidgin—a mix of English and indigenous languages is common. Nigeria is also religiously diverse with about 50% to 40% Muslim-Christian ratio. The remaining 10% practice one form of indigenous religion or the other. While Muslims are concentrated in the North, Christians are mostly found in the South and Middle Belt areas. The Yoruba in the Southwest is about evenly split between both religions. Along with ethnicity, religion is also a flashpoint in contemporary Nigeria as both identities are often invoked in the fierce struggle for political power (Falola, 1999: 5-9).

Although Nigeria became an independent country on October 1, 1960, the geographic entity goes back to 1914 when the British amalgamated what used to be the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria into the Protectorate of Nigeria. Referred to by some historians as the '1914 mistake' for arbitrarily lumping hundreds of very diverse ethnic groups into one nation, successive colonial administrators did manage to keep the disparate units together either by sheer use of force or some divide and rule policies including the uneven application of Western education and values between the largely Christian South and the predominantly Muslim North. Consequently, the process

leading up to sovereignty on October 1, 1960 became mired in protracted constitutional negotiations aimed at accommodating the interests of the various ethnic groups, especially the big three who mutually distrusted each other (Falola, 1999, Diamond, 1995, Suberu, 1994: 56). However, it did not take long after the colonialists left for the deep divisions within the country to erupt into violent conflicts. Following a succession of political crises, a group of young, seemingly altruistic but mostly Igbo military officers on January 15, 1966 toppled the government of Nigeria's first republic. The Prime Minister, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa along with several top Northern Hausa-Fulani politicians and military officers was killed in the coup. Suspicion that the putsch was ethnically motivated led to a counter coup six months later by Hausa-Fulani officers which in turn triggered the general massacre of thousands of Igbo in the North. In response, the Igbo attempted to secede from Nigeria by declaring the Republic of Biafra in their home Eastern Region. The move plunged the country into a 30-month civil war (1967-1970) which claimed over a million lives mostly on the secessionist (Biafran) side (Falola, 1999: 10-11). Mindful of the ethnic roots of the conflict, General Yakubu Gowon (an ethnic minority officer from the North) who took over power following the July 1966 counter coup replaced the original ethnically-based three regions with twelve states in 1967. The unending agitation for the creation of new states has since pushed the number from 19 in 1976 to the current 36. The new states which were almost entirely created by military regimes (1967, 1976, 1987, 1991 and 1996) are usually rationalized as a way of bringing government closer to the people and reducing ethnic conflict as smaller, more homogenous units replace larger states. However, government has never been farther from the people despite the creation of new states. Worse still, every new state or local council created exacerbates inter-communal or group tensions by producing winners and losers with some feeling cheated and others celebrating their new found political advantage (Adogamhe, 2003).

The end of the civil war in January 1970 led to some effort at national reconciliation based on the 'no victor, no vanquished' policy of the federal government. Awash with oil wealth which helped fund the war and the reconstruction efforts that followed, several top members of the General Gowon administration became mired in corruption resulting in the erosion of public support for the regime. However, it was Gowon's broken promise to return the country to civil rule following the war that primarily led to his ouster in a palace coup in 1975. The new military ruler General Murtala

Mohammed was as determined in handing over power to an elected civilian government as he was about stamping out corruption in public life. However, he was barely six months in office when he was killed in a failed putsch on February 13, 1976 and was succeeded by his deputy General Olusegun Obasanjo who oversaw the return of power to civilians in 1979 after 13 years of military rule.

The transition program involved, among other things, the formation of political parties and the drafting of a new constitution based on American style presidential system as opposed to the British parliamentary model that was used during Nigeria's first republic. Six political parties contested the 1979 election five of which were largely ethnically based. Among those were the victorious National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Hausa-Fulani North; the opposition Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN), Yoruba Southwest; the Nigerian Peoples' Party (NPP), Igbo Southeast; the Peoples' Redemption Party (PRP), Hausa-Fulani North; and the Great Nigerian Peoples' Party (GNPP), Kanuri Northeast. Second republic politics (1979-1983) was marked by pervasive corruption among the political elite at all levels of government and across all political parties, widespread inter and intra-party violence, reckless abuse of judicial and police powers among others. These along with the massive rigging of the 1983 general elections in favour of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) caused the military to return to power on December 31, 1983, after only 4 years of civil rule (Falola, 1999: 11-2).

The new military government led by General Muhammad Buhari was initially welcomed by Nigerians who were very disappointed by the performance of the civilian governments from across the various political parties. The regime's pledge to fight corruption and restore law and order also resonated with the people. However, in pursuing its agenda, the regime became very repressive and soon after fell out of favour with the public. Roughly 18 months later (August 27, 1985), it was toppled in a palace coup led by then Army chief, General Ibrahim Babangida. The General Babangida regime (1985-1993) marks the start of the core period of democratization covered by this study. Babangida's economic reform policies started the process of privatizing state-owned corporations just as his political transition program was to return Nigeria to civil rule in 1993. However, his inexplicable annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election widely adjudged to be the freest ever in Nigeria resulted in a massive political crisis that extended military rule by another 5 years, much of it under the brutish reign of General Sani Abacha, whose obsession with self-succession literally brought Nigeria to

her knees. Abacha's sudden death on June 8, 1998 finally paved the way for the conduct of elections and the return to civil rule on March 29, 1999 after roughly 15 years of successive military dictatorships.

Curiously, General Olusegun Obasanjo (retired) who as military head of state handed power to civilians in 1979 reemerged as the civilian president in 1999 under the banner of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP). He served two full four-year terms (1999-2003, 2003-2007) and was succeeded by his handpicked protégé Umaru Yar'Adua who died in May 2010 following a protracted illness. Yar'Adua's remaining term is being served out by his erstwhile Vice-President Goodluck Jonathan with general elections scheduled for April 2011. Out of Nigeria's 50 years as a sovereign nation (as at October 2010), the military was in power for roughly 30 of those leaving the other 20 (1960-1966, 1979-1983, and 1999 to date) to civil rule. Nigeria's composition as a developing multiethnic nation, its long culture of military dictatorship and her eventual return to electoral politics all have implications for the mass media.

1.2. Media and Democratization: State, Capital and Civil Society: An Overview

The core period of the research starts around 1985 when General Ibrahim Babangida soon after seizing power initiated a transition to civil rule program that was to end initially in 1990 but was first postponed to 1992 and later 1993. He also showed interest in pro-market economic policies that ultimately led to the liberalization of broadcasting and telecommunications in 1992. However, his annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election plunged Nigeria into a political crisis which paved the way for General Sani Abacha to seize power and extend military rule by another 5 years. Indeed between 1986 and 1999, Nigeria endured three separate transition to civil rule programs: the General Babangida program, 1986-1993; General Abacha program, 1995-1998; and General Abdulsalam Abubakar program, 1998-1999 that finally returned the country to civil rule (Ofeimum, 1999).

Several interlocking factors—economic, political, and technological—account for the shift towards democratization in the late 1980s and all were largely external and beyond the direct control of Nigeria's military rulers of the time. First was the unraveling of communism which not only undermined despots everywhere most of who were creations of the cold war but also inspired a global push towards multi-party democracy.

Similarly, the economic crises of the 1980s also led to widespread disenchantment among the people (Bourgault, 1995: 206-8). In Nigeria for instance, the economy floundered as global oil prices deflated forcing the government to seek help from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) which, like donor countries, insisted on the deregulation of the economy as a condition for loan and development aid. Under pressure both at home and abroad, General Babangida initiated a process of political and economic liberalization in the late 1980s both of which lacked transparency and were heavily manipulated.

Another equally critical development was the emergence of new satellite technologies capable of bypassing government censorship and news filters. By the 1980s, the elites in many Nigerian cities had purchased fixed service satellite (FSS) dish antennas which they used to pirate satellite signals carrying foreign news programs including live broadcasts of Eastern European political uprisings that toppled communism and helped demystify dictatorships (Onwumechili, 2007: 127-8, Bourgault, 1995: 134). Although the dish antennas, at the time, were accessible only to an affluent few, it did not stop a fearful government from attempting to ban them as they undermined its near total control of broadcast messages. The obvious challenges of effectively banning such new cross-border communication technologies also led the government to begin exploring the possibility of developing some kind of framework for their regulation.

Yet the shift towards media liberalization was hardly linear and decisive. If anything, it was circuitous and marked by a great deal of vacillation. For example, while the General Babangida regime was espousing the principles of liberalization, albeit reluctantly, its 1990 *National Mass Communication Policy* was unequivocal that all organs of mass media must be used to promote national goals, values, interests and security; on the basis of which it endorsed continuing state monopoly of broadcasting (National Mass Communication Policy, 1990). Such highly statist and often totalitarian approach has been the favored paradigm of development in Nigeria and indeed Africa going back to independence. According to Claude Ake (1996: 8-9), the newly independent African leaders desperately in need of something to replace the fast-fading “nationalist ideology of self-government” opted for ‘development’ but not as a strategy of empowerment of the people but rather as a means of fostering political hegemony. Curiously, their notion of development presupposes a strong patrimonial state and is

predicated on the logic that, “development needs unity of purpose and the utmost discipline; (and) that the common interest is not served by oppositional attitudes”. That slippery slope naturally led to “the criminalization of political opposition and the establishment of single-party systems” and other forms of despotic rule prevalent in Africa until the 1990s. The repression and politics of exclusion that this bred over the years turned the continent into a vast theater of wars, conflicts and in some cases, genocide.

With respect to state-media relations, this is most commonly espoused as ‘development journalism’—an ambiguous and malleable term that requires the mass media to be at the service of the state in its arduous task of nation building (Eko, 2003: 178-9, Hyden and Leslie, 2002: 8, Bourgault, 1995: 21-22, Ogbondah, 1994: 177-181). Sometimes narrowly referred to as ‘development journalism’, this media philosophy usually embodies one or more of the following assumptions:

- That all organs of the mass media must be mobilized or better still controlled by the state to effectively fight poverty, improve literacy, foster national unity and facilitate economic development;
- That the ethnically complex and often fragile nature of the fledgling nation-state requires a pliant and uncritical media as dissent would inevitably lead to chaos and disintegration. Consequently, freedom of the press, individual rights of expression and other civil liberties must defer to the real and sometimes contrived developmental challenges the state grapples with;
- That government control of the instruments of mass communication enables it to manage such a scarce national resource in the utmost national interest particularly with respect to raising political consciousness so vital for national unity.

(Hachten and Scotton, 2002: 161-2)

While the rationale for development journalism may appear to have particular salience in a multi-ethnic country like Nigeria where citizens are still being “coaxed into looking beyond ethnic boundaries towards acceptance of the entire nation as a political entity demanding allegiance” (Edeani, 1985: 46), the sad reality is that it is no more than a euphemism for government stranglehold on the mass media. The grave democratic implications of such an approach becomes even more pertinent given the highly personalized nature of state power in the continent that hardly distinguishes between the regime and the state, so much so that regime interest becomes national interest and regime security equates to national security (Aginam, 2005).

With the relative exception of the print media, this overly statist approach has been the dominant paradigm of media policy in Nigeria until the 1990s. The relative exception of the print media can partly be explained on account of it pre-dating broadcasting by over 70 years. However, with the advent of electronic communication, the battle for the control of the mass media in Nigeria, as in other parts of Africa, shifted primarily to radio broadcasting which unarguably is the most popular mass medium in the continent. Reasons for this include the relative cheapness of the medium, the low level of functional literacy (about 50%), the prevalence of multi-language ethnic groups, and a vast rural-based population (about 80%) (Ziegler and Asante, 1992: 55, van der Veur, 2002: 81-2, Daloz and Verrier-Frechette, 2000, 180-1). As Louise Bourgault (1995: 74) explains, radio broadcasting “permitted elites and governments to talk directly to villages, thereby reorienting existing (pre-colonial) village hierarchies toward the central government”. This is not to suggest that the print media in Nigeria was free from government control, as our analysis will show. If anything, it was always on a short leash of the state. However, the emergence, from the very beginning of privately owned newspapers along with government’s obsessive control of broadcasting meant the print media offered more avenues for critical reportage of public affairs both in colonial and post-independent Nigeria.

However, the advent of neoliberal democratization since the 1980s has not only dramatically changed media policies globally but also broadened the discourse beyond the primarily state-centric approach prevalent in Africa. There are usually two broad camps in the largely ideological debate over media deregulation. On the one side are the optimists who celebrate the power of media technologies to facilitate access to information to a diverse range of people in different parts of the world, and by so doing advances the cause of democracy and freedom. This largely neoliberal view casts “the state as the bogeyman of information democracy” with media globalization acting as a counterweight to an overreaching state. As the logic goes:

The democratization of information undermines the attempts of authoritarian states to control information flows and to curb the entrance of ideas that autocrats might deem inappropriate. As catalysts of the breakup of government communications monopolies, market reforms coupled with wider access to media technologies usher in information democracy. Any individual connected to the global information superhighway has access to more information than any of his or her forebears could ever have imagined, and this access comes substantially without government regulation. (Waisbord and Morris, 2001: viii-ix)

This is at best a specious argument that ignores the for-profit ethos of businesses which by no means are altruistic charities. Besides, it glosses over the reality that billions all over the world are excluded from the “global information superhighway” due to economic or other circumstances. In effect, a purely market framework creates tiers of citizens relative to their access to information. Thus rather than an emancipatory and benevolent market that fosters democracy, critics of media deregulation argue that it serves primarily the parochial interests of a few powerful people, perpetuates inequality and undermines the traditional power of the nation-state to act in the best interest of national sovereignty, particularly the protection of national culture and indigenous cultural institutions (Waisbord and Morris, 2001: ix). Part of the problem with this equally romantic critique of media globalization is the assumption that the state necessarily acts in the best interest of its people. Certainly not the postcolonial African State, which inspired by the ‘divide and conquer’ philosophy of its colonial antecedent became “authoritarian in nature and primarily concerned with issues of domination rather than legitimacy” (Chazan et al. 1999: 43). Even with about two decades of civil rule under its belt, African political governance today remains somewhere between clear autocracy and real democracy (Marcus, Mease, and Ottemoeller, 2001).

Not surprisingly, African media scholarship (including this one) often echoes the liberal critique of an overreaching state even if it does not necessarily agree with a solely market alternative that liberalism prescribes (Blankson, 2007, Ogbondah, 2004, Olukotun, 2004, Tetty, 2001, Ojo, 2003, Kasoma, 1997, Blake, 1997, Ogbondah, 1997). It needs stressing though that the state, even the African state, is not inevitably evil. For example, state broadcasters have always made some effort to reflect cultural diversity by reaching even the most disadvantaged communities and demographics that would make no economic sense to commercial operators. This includes transmitting in as many languages as possible as is the case with both the Federal and several State broadcasting corporations in Nigeria (Ojebode and Akingbulu, 2009). What exactly they broadcast to them is entirely another matter. Quite often too, Rwanda is cited as the perfect contemporary example of the tragic consequences of the abuse of radio. While the general premise of that argument is correct, it is necessary to point out that the brazen use of radio to promote genocide began only after that country slid into anarchy following the April 6, 1994 death of the country’s moderate Hutu president in a mysterious plane crash. Prior to that, the State was very instrumental in reining in

extremists and preventing them from blatantly using radio for genocidal ends (Aginam, 2005: 130-3).

Another contentious issue in the debate over media deregulation centres around “communication sovereignty” (Waisbord and Morris, 2001: vii); the ability of the nation-state to control the information flows within its borders. While some, mostly critical scholars argue that such authority has been severely undermined, others are not so sure (see Zhao and Hackett, 2005: 6, Waisbord and Morris, 2001: ix, Curran, 2002: 167-172, Chadha and Kavoori, 2005, Horwitz, 2001: 37-8). Although certain types of communication technologies clearly undermine a nation’s ironclad control of information flow within its territory, as the Nigerian experience will show, such as impact is at best relative as the nation-state still retains enormous powers through regulations, policies, legislations and in some cases extra-legal means to largely influence, if not control the information frameworks and flows within its borders especially with respect to critical counter-hegemonic materials that challenge the status-quo.

A related but much longer debate going back to the 1970s centres on the effect of Western media products on developing nations that critics call cultural imperialism; a discourse that has gained more prominence with media globalization. Contemporary debates on the issue can be reduced to two distinctly broad theoretical paradigms: the critical political economy tradition and the Cultural Studies approach. Relying primarily on macro-structural and institutional analysis of global media ownership and the overwhelming unidirectional flow of media products that clearly indicate an Anglo-American domination, pioneer critical political economy theorists (Tunstall, 1977, Schiller, 1976, 1992, Mattelart, 1983, Hamelink, 1983) cast the global media as a homogenizing and irresistible cultural force that corrodes non-Western values and lifestyles. Some of the earliest terms used to describe this global monoculture which may be loosely western but essentially American include *Americanization*, *McDonaldization*, *Coca-Cola-ization*, or *Coca-colonialism*. With the intensification of media globalization over the last decade, newer terms like *Murdorchization*—in reference to Australian Rupert Murdoch’s extensive global media interests (Thussu, 2006), *electronic colonialism* (Mcphail, 2006), *digital capitalism* (Schiller, 1999) *electronic empires* (Thussu, 1998) and *googlization* (Thussu, 2006) —have emerged to reflect both the increasingly de-centered nature of globalization, as the influence of Rupert Murdoch would suggest, as well as the digitalized technologies that drive the process. The critical

political economy approach also emphasizes the enormous influence of the few mega-corporations that control the production and distribution of global media products; their extensive stakes in other sectors of the global economy and how the combination of both foster cultural, economic and political hegemony particularly in developing countries (Artz & Kamalipour, 2003, McChesney, 2002, Schiller, 1999, Herman & McChesney, 1997). This critique of cultural imperialism has been faulted on a number of grounds chief among which are its macro structuralism and determinism as well as its rigidly negative view of the 'global' even as it romanticizes the 'local' as pristine and authentic (Ang, 1996: 153). It has also been criticized for too often taking the nation-state as a homogenous cultural unit which is rarely the case (McMillin, 2007:11).

In contrast, cultural anthropologists (see Hannerz, 1992, Ferguson, 2006), argue that transnational exchanges of cultural forms, products and ideas do not necessarily undermine differences nor inevitably lead to cultural homogenization. Noting that no culture develops and thrives in a state of "primordial isolation", James Ferguson (2006: 30) argues that rather than "numbing uniformity", transnational cultural interaction may in fact result in "complex forms of cultural creativity...a dynamic "cut-and-mix" world of surprising borrowings, ironic reinventions, and dazzling resignifications". Arjun Appadurai (1996) further underscores this dialectics when he argued that globalizing cultural forces in their varied engagement with different ideologies and traditions across the world produce "heterogeneous dialogues" or "disjunctures" which he located in five key global processes: *Ethnoscape*, the movement of people; *Technoscape*, the transfer of technologies; *Finanscape*, the flow of investment/capital; *Mediascape*, the exchange of media and cultural products; and *Ideoscape*, the meshing of ideas. Beyond heterogeneity, some media theorists identify "cultural hybridism" as yet another possible outcome of media globalization (Martin-Barbero, 1993, Kraidy, 2005). This involves a unique synthesis of the global and the local or what is not commonly called "Glocalisation" (Thussu, 2007: 21). In essence, cultural studies theorists tend to view media globalization as a more or less dialectical process of cultural appropriation and re-appropriation in which audiences imbued with human agency negotiate with media texts relative to their experiences, contexts and needs (Tomlinson, 1991, Appadurai, 1996, McMillin, 2007).

Also prominent in cultural studies discourse of media globalization are the "contra" or reverse flows of non-Western media products that challenge, even if

modestly, the West's dominance of the global culture industry. Among the better known examples of media "contra-flows" are Latin American Telenovelas (Rego & L.A. Pastina, 2007), the Indian Bollywood film industry (Govil, 2007, Thussu, 2007: 26), Japanese animation films (Iwabuchi, 2007) and more recently Korean films (Kim, 2007). An increasingly popular but often loosely defined concept, "contra-flows" from the perspective of post-colonial transnational cultural studies refers to "the institutional, cultural and political matrix of a world framed by processes of global cultural power and local negotiation: a world experienced through the identity politics of nations, individuals and cultures and negotiated through contestations of locality, nationality and global citizenship" (Kavori, 2007: 49). Although critical political economists also acknowledge the relative importance of contra-flows in ameliorating the unidirectional flow of global media products; they tend to put more stock on the emancipatory potentials of progressive non-commercial media initiatives including progressive blogs that challenge the ideological prejudices of the mainstream global media (Downing, 2003, Downing, 2002, Boyd-Barrett, 2007, Brooten, 2005). Apparently, Nigeria is not shielded from global information flows as deregulation has further exposed her to a wider range of media sources including cable and satellite technologies that are primarily entertainment-oriented and affordable only by the middle and upper classes.

This brings us to the vexed issue of neoliberal democratization in Africa. According to David Harvey (2005: 2) neo-liberalism as a political-economic theory "proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade" with the role of the state limited to providing an enabling environment for such practices to flourish. To some, the ongoing political transitions which are well into their second decade mark the dawn of a new era in Africa's seemingly elusive quest for a just, democratic society. Critics are however not convinced arguing that the mere conduct of often fundamentally flawed elections do not equate to democracy. For them, Africa is merely going through the motions of democratization producing little fire and even less heat.

Debates on the merits or otherwise of neoliberal democracy in Africa becomes even more heated given the West's sustained effort in the last three decades or so to turn it into some kind of orthodoxy. In the gospel of neo-liberalism, political liberalization and economic deregulation are inextricably linked with the latter often made a condition

for development aid (Ake, 1993, Herbst, 1992). Similarly, 'good governance' has increasingly come to be defined more with respect to free market policies and less with any substantive effort at political liberalization, popular empowerment and respect for the rule of law (Jenkins, 2001: 262-3, Schmitz, 1995: 69). As a result, critical theorists like William Robinson (1996) and John Saul (1997) have likened the current exercise to fostering "polyarchy—a minimalist and purely procedural process that reduces democracy to competitive elections among different groups of elites while at the same time alienating the vast majority of the populace from any active role in the decision-making process.

As in much of the developing world, debates about democratization in Africa revolve around such weighty issues as the suitability of the liberal model for cultures that primarily privilege a communitarian worldview and whether economic deregulation is antithetical to democratization or a necessary condition for it (Olukoshi, 1998, Ake, 1993a, Ake, 1993b, Joseph 1993: 317-8). Curiously, in Africa, key proponents of political liberalization such as students, labor activists and intellectuals are usually among the most strident critics of economic deregulation. In contrast, champions of free-market policies such economic elites and even the state are notoriously lukewarm to any genuine effort at political democratization (Uzodike, 1997: 32). Notwithstanding the claims in official development quarters, national experiences from the developing world have shown little to no causal link between economic liberalization and political democratization. On the contrary, the policy choices and priorities dictated by the former often impede the latter (Woods, 2000: 8-9) resulting in what political theorist Claude Ake (1995) calls the "democratization of disempowerment"—the inability of people to actively participate in political and economic decisions that affect their lives in a context that is neither dominated by the state nor the market.

Beside the primacy of capital, a second major consequence of the diminution of State power as envisaged in neoliberal theory is the ascendancy of civil society, both of which are expected to act as a counterweight to governmental authority. Civil society is a highly ambiguous concept which at best has been described as "a polysemic signifier" (Keane, 1998: 36) and at worst as a "promiscuous" idea appropriated by every conceivable contemporary political ideology (Jenkins, 2001: 251). This conceptual challenge is further complicated by the fact that civil society is at one and the same time both a social value and a set of social institutions that mean different things in different

sociopolitical worlds. For example, while Eastern Europeans saw capitalism as representing freedom from state totalitarianism, Western post-Marxists repudiate capitalism and instead anchor their hopes for freedom in new progressive movements out to subvert the dominant capitalist order (Hall, 1995). By way of definition, civil society from the standpoint of a democratic constitutional state; refers broadly to a variety of organizations of different ideological persuasions that are not formally a part of governmental structures or the profit-driven private sector, although they can collaborate with or try to influence them on whatever issues such organizations deem important. And while civil society groups adopt a broad variety of strategies (lobbying, advocacy, public campaigns, litigation, civil disobedience and more) to realize their goals, some notable exceptions include violent agitations in the pursuit of such efforts and systematic attempts to directly take over state power (Scholte, 2000: 174-8).

However, in developing and largely authoritarian societies like many in Africa where political ethnicism and ethno-religious conflicts are endemic, civil society is sometimes not just cast in opposition to the state but also recognizes the extra-democratic struggles of aggrieved groups against the state or other dominant interests (Baker, 2002, Monga, 1996: 3-4, Chabal, 1992, Bayart 1986). Such “uncivil societies” as John Keane (1996) calls them are often either downplayed or completely excluded by Western theorists and international donor agencies from their conception of civil society, even if mostly in the operational policy realm. The same applies to groups emanating from the complex and often problematic African traditional social sphere (Mamdani 1995, 3-4, Ottaway, 2000). Notwithstanding, ethno-religious movements and in some cases militias have become either concurrent developments with or a consequence of neoliberal democratization.

This trend has manifested in Nigeria in three very problematic ways. First is the rise of ethnic movements and militias fighting for resource control, cultural identity and in some cases self-determination particularly in various parts of Southern Nigeria; what Adedayo Adekson calls “the civil society problematique” (Adekson, 2004, see also Obi, 2001, Babawale, 2003). Among the most prominent of such groups are the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND), the Movement for the Survival of Biafra (MASOB) and the Odua Peoples’ Congress (OPC). Then, there is the challenge of religious fundamentalism particularly in the largely Muslim North which took an even more dangerous turn with several states in the region adopting the Sharia legal code

soon after the end of military rule in 1999. The move was not only a direct challenge on Nigeria's secularism but also a major impediment to the constitution of a democratic, all inclusive public sphere where religious and other differences could potentially be resolved through dialogue and consensus-building (Obadare, 2004). Although religion, like ethnicity, has always been a flashpoint in Nigeria, its politicization especially by the elites has become more rampant with democratization (Mustapha, 2004). The third and even more pervasive challenge which sometimes also manifests in the guise of ethno-religious conflicts is the 'native versus settler' syndrome that makes mockery of even the most rudimentary notions of citizenship. Political anthropologist, Mahmood Mamdani (1996, 2001) traces this trend back to the dichotomous colonial policy that divided the populace into "citizens and subjects" with the former (made up largely of European colonialists) accorded full civil rights under the law and the latter (made up of natives) denied such legal protections. According to him, the dichotomous policy has since metamorphosed in reverse order in post-independence Africa where the indigenous 'native' now lords it over the 'settler'. In effect, many Nigerians living outside their ethnic geographic regions and in some cases within that region are considered 'settlers' and often treated as second class citizens with limited rights and opportunities. And any attempts by so called 'settlers' to assert their rights politically or economically usually results in violent conflicts especially in poor rural communities.

Democratization has also witnessed a surge in a variety of prominent, often elitist ethnic organizations formed primarily to jockey for political and other advantages. Some of the more influential organizations include the 'Ohaneze Ndi Igbo' in the East, 'Afenifere' in the Yoruba South-West, and the 'Arewa Consultative Forum' in the Hausa-Fulani North. Despite the problematic nature and agenda of these ethnically based groups some of which adopt extra-democratic tactics, Claude Ake (1996: 132) argues that an authentic African democracy must "recognize nationalities, sub-nationalities, ethnic groups, and communities as social formations that express freedom and self-realization and will have to grant them rights to cultural expression and political and economic participation".

As already mentioned, the challenge of dealing with such complex ethnically based segments of civil society have led some, particularly Western nations and donor agencies to underscore instead the role of 'consociational' groups like trade unions, professional associations, women groups and other civic and voluntary organizations in

facilitating democratization. Such civic organizations which are generally thought to be more inclusive and committed to building a society based on the common good are usually supported by donor agencies as an alternative to groups based primarily on primordial ties of kingship (Bourgault, 1998: 88-90). This thinking is reflected to some degree in a 1996 major policy shift by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in which it distinguished between Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and Civic Advocacy Organizations (CAOs) deciding henceforth to only to fund the latter (Jenkins, 2001: 263). In effect, the USAID policy change excluded strong, voluntary and often ethnically-based groups from its conception of civil society favoring instead a much narrower model embodied in advocacy organizations with little or no organic ties to the communities they represent. Critics like Marina Ottaway have described such advocacy groups as “free-floating entities” who “promote an organizational form of pluralism without necessarily giving representation to genuine interest groups” or advocate for their direct participation in policy-making (Ottaway, 2000: 78-82).

This is a consequence of the largely neoliberal framework under which the civic advocacy groups emerged. Since the 1990s, international donor assistance to civil society in the South has been invariably geared towards three mutually reinforcing outcomes: transitions to multi-party politics, the strengthening of fledgling democracies, and the adoption of market-oriented policies (Jenkins, 2001: 253-5). These processes emerged in the broader context of a major policy shift in development commonly called the New Policy Agenda (NPA). While the policy varies from one funding agency to the other, its core assumptions are twofold. First is the preeminence of the market and private initiatives as the most efficient and cost-effective way for both economic growth and service delivery. Under this framework, governments should merely facilitate the private provision of services or support non-governmental groups to provide such services where organized capital cannot. Second, the policy saw NGOs as an important resource for democratization that if adequately empowered, can act as a check on the state. The inherent logic is that the weaker the state, the more likely the market will operate without interference. In either case, the nation-state remains the prime target of the this donor assistance policy, with transnational capital threatening from above and local civic advocacy organizations, often backed by foreign funding nibbling from below. Such neoliberal policies which have been likened to “the privatization of the state”

(Hibou, 2004) helped spur an explosion of civic advocacy groups in the Africa since the late 1980s; many of who led the charge towards democratization.

Beside such leading labor and professional groups like the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC), the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), and the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) which had been among the most critical voices against military despotism, the late 1980s and early 1990s saw the emergence of a range of civic advocacy organizations concerned primarily with issues of human rights, democratization and freedom of the press. These include the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP), the Campaign for Democracy (CD), the Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR), the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Center for Free Speech (CFS) and Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER) among several others which were established in the years that followed (see Aginam, 2008, Bourgault, 1998: 88-9). Mostly founded by university trained middle-class professionals and largely dependent on foreign donors; such intermediary advocacy organizations stand in contrast to grassroots movements favored by progressive social theorists. Their perceived elitism has led critics to label them “trustee organizations” (Ottaway, 2000: 78-83), even worse, “the Trojan horses of neoliberalism” (T. Wallace cited in Harvey, 2005: 177) who at best merely try to alleviate the worst excesses of the global capitalist system without challenging its exploitative ethos (Ali, 2006). For such critics, the celebration of civic advocacy groups is no more than a valorization of civil society. However, as will become evident, many of the advocacy organizations, especially those concerned with democratization, human rights and freedom of expression, were not only in the vanguard of the campaign to end military rule in Nigeria but have remained in the forefront of various major initiatives aimed at fostering a more substantive democratization by way of legislative and policy reforms required of a democratic society.

There is no arguing the fact that neoliberal policies have severely undermined the power of the African state particularly with respect to fiscal and monetary policies and other related matters. Groaning under crushing foreign debt burden many countries in the continent exist in a state of “fractionated sovereignty” with international financial institutions acting as the “tutelary government”. And such foreign interventions sometimes go beyond setting broad macro-economic policies to include among other things, domestic economic management, credit control, determining consumption and other social priorities, and in some cases, the direct control of the treasury (Mbembe,

2001: 55). However, when it comes to issues relating to substantive political liberalization, where donor countries and international financial institutions are not as fastidious; the Nigerian ruling elite driven by self-interest usually gets its way.

Two disturbing trends have thus far become evident in the Nigerian post-military experience. One is the selective application of neoliberal policies relative to the economic and political interests of the ruling elite as evidenced in the contrasting policies in broadcasting and telecommunications. While telecommunications is almost about fully deregulated, government continues to maintain a tight rein on broadcasting despite liberalization. Such strategic policy calculations are by no means peculiar to Nigeria. For instance, in her influential study of Asia and in particular China's rather cautious engagement with neo-liberalism, Aihwa Ong (2006) identified two interventionist trends—"neoliberalism as exception" and "exceptions to neoliberalism". While the former refers to those sectors, spaces and populations that the government chose to subject to the operating logics of neoliberalism, the latter alludes to those excluded from it often based on the enlightened self-interest of the ruling elite who in the Nigerian case see broadcasting as a critical resource for maintaining their grip on power.

The democratic deficit of neoliberalism is also evident in the very minimalist nature of Nigerian democratization where the transition which occurred in 1999 has not been followed by the more substantive phases of consolidation and institutionalization. For democratic theorists, the transition phase is usually marked by the replacement of despotism by some form of electoral politics and the establishment of rudimentary rules regarding the conduct of state power as well as access to it both by the political class and society at large. The latter and often overlapping stages of consolidation and institutionalization involve among other things the enthronement of the rule of law and strong constitutional mechanisms to hold the government accountable to the people (Grugel, 2002, Sanbrook, 2000, Perez-Diaz, 1993). A little over 10 years into civilian governance, Nigerian media laws, policies and regulations continue to operate under military era Decrees that automatically became Acts of parliament with no changes to them. The reform of laws and development of substantive media policies and regulations required of a democratic society has since become the primary concern of several media NGOs who unfortunately always seem to hit a brick wall with a state so determined to undermine democratic communication. Some of the major NGO-led

advocacy campaigns revolve around efforts to enact a Freedom of Information law (see Chapter 3) and a movement in support of community radios (see Chapter 5).

1.3. Research Question, Theoretical Approaches, Scope and Organization of the Study

The research project plans to address the question: how does the current policy of liberalization bring changes to the structure and philosophy of the Nigerian media and to what extent does it constitute democratization? Rather than a study of theories of state and democratization, the project focuses primarily on media policies and practice in the context of a transitional state. And since democratization in Nigeria is still in its early stages (roughly 11 years since the end of military rule), with institutional, legal and policy frameworks still evolving, the study, can at best, only offer a broad, yet rigorous overview of an emerging and sometimes uncertain process. It is hoped that the preliminary findings of this project will help prepare the ground for more in-depth sectoral studies in the years ahead. Although the research focuses primarily on the print and broadcast media, issues relating to telecommunications deregulation are sometimes broached to underscore the contrasting policies the state has pursued in that sector relative to broadcasting and the socioeconomic and political calculations behind the different policies. For example, as already observed, while telecommunication is on fast track to full deregulation, the state continues to maintain a stranglehold on broadcasting despite liberalization. This is similar to the Malaysian experience which has been described as “regulated deregulation” (Nain, 2000: 146). Pardon the oxymoron but Nigeria and democracy together is itself an oxymoron.

Given the tendency of Eurocentric social theory to universalize the particular (Mbembe, 2001, Ake 1979), the study plans to examine the issues using aspects of three disparate, yet mutually reinforcing approaches—critical globalization studies, postcolonial theory and critical political economy. The decision is informed by the need to approach the issues in the most rounded way possible with each theoretical approach compensating for whatever limitations the others may have in the context of Nigeria. As is common with qualitative research, the approaches will help provide “a broad explanation” of the issues under study with emphasis on each approach subject to its relative importance to specific parts of the study. The goal is not to apply them evenly across the board but to instead integrate as much of each approach as possible so long

it helps explain the complex process of media and democratization in Nigeria. This involves relating the data to the theories in an inductive and dialectical way, refining the dialectics between data and theory as the work progresses and making value judgements regarding the relative strength of aspects of each approach for different sections of the study (Creswell, 2003: 132-4).

A few words on the chosen theoretical approaches starting with 'globalization' which unarguably is one of the most ideologically contested terms to come out of political theory in the past two decades. This is not made easier by the fact that it is also still an unfolding phenomenon that poses conceptual challenges both within nation-states and globally. In their influential study David Held and Anthony McGrew (2002: 98-117) identified six major paradigms or politics of globalization—Neoliberals, Liberal Internationalists, Institutional Reformers, Global Transformers, Statist Protectionists and Radical/Marxist/Anarchists most of which are intensely at odds with the others. The search for conceptual clarity has even led some to distinguish between 'globalization' and "globalism". Globalization in this context refers broadly to the long historical process towards an interconnected world that dramatically accelerated with the dissolution of time and space made possible by electronic communication technologies; a phenomenon that Canadian communications theorist Marshall McLuhan famously hailed in the 1960s as fostering a "global village" (see for example McLuhan, 1964, Meyrowitz, 1986, Mattelart, 2000). On the other hand, 'Globalism' or what some call 'neoliberal globalization' refers more narrowly to a free-market ideology which since the end of communism has been elevated to a political orthodoxy (Steger, 2009, Saul, 2005, Steger, 2004, Nederveen Pieterse, 2004).

While both critics and apologists generally agree that globalization is a long historical process, there is hardly any agreement on the consequences of its prevalent neoliberal form. For liberal theorists, globalization among other benefits offers a level playing field for countries, companies and individuals from various parts of the world to collaborate and compete. Such optimism is often hinged on the boon in new communication technologies that increasingly facilitate transnational trade and socio-cultural integration as well as the growing outsourcing of jobs (both manufacturing and services) that offer immense economic benefits to developing countries by improving the quality of lives of their peoples and bringing them to the threshold of the global economy (Friedman, 2005). However, such a flattering view of neoliberal globalization is at odds

with neo-Marxist theorists who have been very critical of global capitalism for its commodification of values (Harvey 1989, Mosco 1996: 143-4), and its exploitative ethos (Stiglitz, 2002) both of which have intensified in the last two decades leading to what some now refer to as “predatory globalization” (Falk 1999) or the “globalization of poverty” (Chossudovsky 1997). Thus for such theorists, developments like outsourcing is at best a brazen attempt by corporations to exploit cheap labor and raw materials as well as lax environmental standards in developing countries; practices they argue exacerbate global asymmetries by condemning developing countries to a state of perpetual dependency. More recently, terms like the “new imperialism” have been used to explain the prevailing neoliberal order either with respect to America’s growing militarism in pursuit of its strategic economic and political interests around the world (Harvey, 2003) or with the West’s overwhelming control of international financial institutions that continue to impose exploitative economic policies on developing countries in the name of development aid (Biel, 2000). Although reflective of the broader processes of globalization, the study primarily addresses the impact of neoliberalism on Nigeria’s media; in particular how the state has tried to balance the liberalizing imperatives of democratization with its own strategic self-interests.

Like globalization theory, postcolonial studies is not a monolithic or homogenous academic field as it deals with a complex range of issues emerging from colonial relations and its aftermath (Krishnaswamy, 2008). With strong roots in literary studies, its early concerns centred on issues of ideological hegemony; particularly the subjectivities of culture and identity, albeit in a global diasporic context (Shohat, 1992, Dirlik, 1994). Early postcolonial studies engaged in a radical rethink of forms of knowledge and social identities fostered by Western cultural domination by dismantling the binaries erected by colonialism between the centre and the periphery, the colonizer and the colonized and revealing societies globally in their complex heterogeneity. In doing so, it hopes to reconstruct the identities of subordinated peoples by giving them a pride of place in history and a sense of self-worth embodied in their new hybrid selves (Hoogvelt, 2001: 170). However, this narrow cultural focus changed for two principal reasons; the institutionalization of postcolonial studies in Western universities as a replacement for the disciplines previously called Third World and Development Studies, and postcolonial studies timely and simultaneous entrance into the lexicon of development studies “as the product of, engagement with and as contestation of globalization” (Hoogvelt, 2001: 165-

6). What emerged was a new tradition of postcolonial studies that showed greater interest on the effects of global capital on the former colonies. For Arif Dirlik (1994: 355), a leading theorist of this tradition of postcolonial studies, the flexible and de-centred nature of contemporary capitalism has not only disorganized earlier conceptualizations of global relations that traditional postcolonial theory is concerned with but has also brought fresh challenges in its wake. These include: Eurocentricism and its relationship to capitalism; the kind of modernity that is relevant to a postmodern, post-socialist, post-Third World situation; the place of the nation in development; the relationship between the local and the global; the place of boundaries and borders in a world where capital, production, and peoples are in constant motion, interpenetrations and reversals between different worlds; borderland subjectivities and epistemologies (hybridity); homogeneity versus heterogeneity among others.

While one does not necessarily buy into the entire postcolonial discourse, its relevance to this study, in part lies in the critical examination of both the colonial and neo-colonial experience and the manner in which the aftermath interacts with globalization (Hoogvelt, 2001: 171). Writers like Achille Mbembe (2001), Mahmoud Mamdani (2001), Amy Chua (2004), Pal Aluwalia (2001), Rotimi Suberu (2001), Adedayo Adekson (2004) among many others have in various ways explored the complex and often problematic nexus between neoliberal democratization, ethnicity, identity, resource control and statehood in Africa. The persistence of the colonial past in the present is central to the perennial crises of Nigerian nationhood. Curiously, the late Chief Obafemi Awolowo one of Nigeria's foremost nationalists and opposition leader in the short-lived Second Republic (1979-1983) whose political influence still looms large in his Yoruba ethnic region of the South West said in 1957 amid the debates for and against self-rule: "Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no Nigerians in the same sense as there are 'English', 'Welsh', or 'French'. The word 'Nigeria' is merely a distinct appellation to distinguish those who live within its boundaries from those who do not" (cited in Mowoe, 1999: 110). Same year, Sir Abubakar Tafawa Balewa who three years later became Nigeria's first Prime Minister expressed a similar feeling: "since the amalgamation of the Southern and Northern Provinces in 1914, Nigeria has existed as one country only on paper. It is still far from being united....The Nigerian people are historically different in their backgrounds and

cultures and Nigerian unity is only a British intention for the country....” (cited in Mowoe, 1999: 110).

Several core interests of both postcolonial theory and critical globalization Studies coalesce around the major concerns of critical political economy of communications: the complex dynamics between social and power relations on the one hand and the governance, production, distribution and consumption of resources, in this case, media products on the other (Mosco, 1996: 25, Calabrese, 2004: 2). Influenced largely by Marxism; early political economy focused on structural inequalities and class relations in capitalist societies. However, criticism of its narrow and reductionist approach led to its internationalisation through Dependency and World Systems theories and the incorporation of other forms of hegemony common in societies—capitalist or otherwise (Wasko, 2004). Besides, scholars like David Hesmondhalgh (2002) have taken issues with political economy’s preoccupation with the production side of cultural industries while paying scant attention to the consumption side—the major concern of cultural studies. While the domain of political economy of communication (at least in the West) traverses such diverse areas as historical studies, media conglomeration, commodification and commercialization of information, diversification, integration, convergence, synergy among others; it is its concern with media democratization, media-state relations, media access and pluralism within a deregulated framework and civil society interventions in media policy and practice that are of particular interest to this study.

As already observed, the state-centric culture of power in Nigeria has logically led media scholars to echo more or less the liberal theory of a Leviathan state in which the media must stand guard as a vigilant watchdog. This sometimes takes the focus away from media owners who as much as the State are complicit in using the media to advance their interests (Curran, 2002, Hallin, 2000). But in the Nigerian context, it is hard to overlook the state as it is the sustainer of both the public and private sectors in an extensive network of political and economic elites built primarily on cronyism. Thus rather than a pervasive form of capitalism in the classic tradition of market society, what obtains in Nigeria is the ‘enclave’ model in which a small indigenous capitalist class controls the economy sometimes with foreign collaborators. And while they are occasionally conflicted by primary loyalties and ethnic affiliations, they nonetheless always manage to form a common bond against the subordinate classes (Ake, 1985:

21). It is estimated that just about 1% of the population controls over 75% of Nigeria's wealth ranking it among countries with the highest number of millionaires (Bourgault, 1983: 83). In effect, Nigeria's media industry is sustained largely on the basis of extensive social (including ethnic) ties and mutual interests of economic and political elites of which the state, or better still the regime, is at the centre.

This in part is reflected in the case of broadcasting liberalization where the much anticipated plurality of viewpoints has so far failed to materialize. Instead, it largely remains the sad case of many stations, one voice; that of the licensor (Aginam, 2005: 130). If anything, the state has remained the major obstacle to putting in place policies and legislations that will foster a freer and more democratic media sphere despite the sustained but often futile advocacy of non-governmental organizations on a range of such issues.

Substantial part of the research for this project was done during a field trip in Nigeria in the summer of 2004. The trip allowed me to access documents (including unpublished materials like policy and strategy papers) as well as interview several major stakeholders in the media—journalists, NGO activists, bureaucrats and policy makers. I have since kept abreast of developments primarily through the web and occasionally by e mails and phone calls.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 takes a historical look at the Nigerian media from the colonial period to the early 1980s—just before the onset of democratization, underscoring both the ethnically fractious and state driven nature of Nigeria's media evolution in the print and broadcast media. Chapter 2 takes the historical narrative further into the long and tortuous political transition years (1985-1999) noting the several twists and turns that eventually returned Nigeria to civil rule after decades of military despotism. For reasons of convenience, I have as much as possible, structured the narratives in both chapters in a linear order around the various regimes and how they engaged the mass media. Chapter 3 takes critical look at the institutional and regulatory frameworks for the media since the end of military rule noting the serious democratic deficit of the current order (particularly with respect to broadcasting) and the sustained advocacy of civil society groups (i.e. media NGOs) to redress the situation. This includes efforts to reform media laws, a campaign to enact a freedom of information law and advocacy towards the licensing of community radios to facilitate grassroots participation in governance and development. Chapter 4 takes an in-depth look at the

role the print media played in democratization, the various types of media that the process engendered and how both the liberal press and the more radical advocacy press (which took on the military head-on) have emerged the dominant press types pushing the once prevalent government press to the margins. Chapter 5 discusses the politics of broadcasting in Nigeria and concludes that despite liberalization, not much has changed in the sector as government continues to wield the big stick with intimidated private broadcasters always watching over their shoulders. The conclusion calls for urgent and substantive institutional and regulatory reforms as a condition for media democratization in Nigeria. But how to get an obdurate government to embrace those ideals remains the challenge.

Chapter 2.

State and the Evolution of the Mass Media in Nigeria: From Colonial Times to the Early 1980s

While some historical sources claim that a monthly publication, the *Kano Chronicle* published in Arabic and Hausa by the Kano Emirate Administration predated the arrival of British colonialists in Nigeria, most media historians trace the origin of the Nigerian press to Reverend Henry Townsend of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who in 1859 founded *Iwe-Irohin*, a missionary tract that combined Christian proselytism with aspects of social, cultural and political commentary (Golding and Elliot, 1979: 28-9, Echeruo, 1977: 3, Ogbondah, 1994: 27-8). Based in Abeokuta, a cradle of Christianity in colonial Nigeria, the bilingual publication was really no more than a newsletter “divided vertically into two equal parts, with a column offering a Yoruba text and the other the same material in English” (Sobowale, 1985: 28). This was followed in June 1863 by *Anglo-Africa*, a secular but largely uncritical publication founded by Robert Campbell, a mulatto businessman of Jamaican descent. Given his mixed race, Campbell understandably used his newspaper primarily to mediate the increasingly acrimonious turf war between white and native businessmen but never really championed the cause of the marginalized native populations. And for roughly two decades, *Anglo-Africa* was about the only established local newspaper in Lagos, the major commercial center of the colonial era (Echeruo, 1977: 3). The earliest phase of the Nigerian press was the era of publisher-printers who were mostly small West Indian entrepreneurs hoping to exploit the commercial opportunities the new colonies of Lagos and Gold Coast offered having failed to break the entrenched monopoly practices of British companies in the older colonies of Liberia and Sierra-Leone (Golding and Elliot, 1979: 29). In particular, the British annexation of Lagos in 1861 and the subsequent opening up of the hinterland for trade spurred business activities which in turn increased the need for newspapers both as a medium of information and advertising (Sobowale, 1985: 28).

Despite the largely apolitical nature of these early press endeavors, Governor Freeman in 1862 favored the introduction of a paper tax to stem what he saw as “a dangerous instrument in the hands of semi-civilized Negroes” (Fred Omu, 1968 cited in Golding and Elliott, 1979: 29). The 1880s witnessed a boom in new publications among which, were the first indigenous newspapers published by the native elite. Some of the major titles of that decade include the *Lagos Times and Gold Coast Advertiser* (November 10, 1880), the *Lagos Observer* (March 2, 1882), the *Eagle and Lagos Critic* (1883), the *Weekly Mirror* (December 17, 1887), and the *Weekly Record* (1891). The dramatic rise in the number of publications not only reflected the rapid growth of the Lagos economy in which revenue rose from a meager 7,130 pounds in 1862 to 63, 504 pounds in 1885 but also underscored its emergence as a distinct colonial city (Echeruo, 1977: 4). Just like their precursors, the Lagos papers of the 1880s were no more than conduits for such community information like civic receptions, parties, marriages, theatrical performances, sporting activities, meetings, fashion and household information, notices of births and deaths among others. Their government news consisted largely of court summons and legal notices as well as information about the appointment, promotion or transfer of government officials. They also disseminated such business information as ship movements and the arrival of goods, planned auctions and sales, as well as classified advertisements on real estate, insurance, health, and employment opportunities. Some of the papers like the *West African Miscellany* (1883) also took on the role of “popular educator” by striving to make accessible to the young and educated natives excerpts from important books aimed at expanding their minds (Echeruo, 1977: 5-6). In terms of style, 19th century Lagos journalism was essentially “pompous and long-winded”, a flaw unwittingly underscored by the *Eagle* which in the March 31, 1883 edition admonished its contributors on its preferred style:

It is of vital importance, in writing, always to come straight to the point, that the reader may not dive as it were, the recesses of dense jungles, nor get hopelessly entangled in the meshes of verbal embarrassment, in endeavoring to discover the meaning of what is written...the facts should mark the basis of their information, the style should be perspicuous, and the form condensed. (cited in Echeruo, 1977: 8)

Although the pioneer indigenous newspapers were, for the most part apolitical, they still reflected a certain degree of cultural nationalism by celebrating the humanity and values of natives and challenging the colonialist’s myth of racial superiority

(Echeruo, 1977: 7). However, the nascent nationalist consciousness blossomed into robust political journalism after the 1900s and became the hallmark of an activist indigenous press in its drawn battle against the oppressive policies of successive British colonial governments. Among the earliest policies to rankle the burgeoning nationalist press was the Education Ordinance Act of 1882 which made English compulsory in the colony. There was also the growing consolidation of the monopoly of the Royal Niger Company which undercut the interests of local businesses some of who were also newspaper publishers (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 29). Their growing scrutiny of the colonial administration caused then Governor Fredrick Lugard to contemptuously dismiss them as “scurrilous local yellow press” (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 29). As the press attacks grew more vitriolic, the colonial government responded with repressive laws aimed at muzzling them. While the *Newspaper Ordinance Act of 1903* (limited to what was then Southern Nigeria) was the first of such legislations, more far reaching in their consequences were the *Seditious Offences Ordinance of 1909*, the *Criminal Code Ordinance of 1916* and the *Newspaper Ordinance of 1917*. The *Newspaper Ordinance of 1917* which extended the 1903 law to all parts of the Nigerian colony (following the 1914 amalgamation of the Protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria) required potential newspaper owners to register with the colonial administration the names and addresses of the proprietor, publisher, editor and printer of the proposed publication. In addition, the potential owner must swear an affidavit along with a deposit of 250 Pounds or provide two sureties together with a bond. The severity of the law was such that its strict penalties extended to vendors who sold newspapers that were in violation (Elias, 1969, Sobowale, 1985: 29). Even more obnoxious both on account of its sheer elasticity and stunning ambiguity was the *Seditious Offences Ordinance of 1909* which, in Section 3 states:

Whoever by words, either spoken or written, or by signs, or by visible representation or otherwise, brings into hatred or contempt or excites or tries to excite disaffection, disloyalty or feelings of enmity towards His Majesty or the Government established by law in Southern Nigeria, shall be punished with imprisonment which may extend to two years, or with a fine or with both imprisonment and fine. (Sobowale, 1985: 29)

The *Criminal Code Ordinance of 1916* also contained provisions on “seditious intention” which it sweepingly defined as any act capable of any of the following purposes:

- To bring the Sovereign or the Governor in person into hatred or contempt;
- To excite disaffection against the Sovereign or the Governor in person, or the Government or Constitution of Nigeria as by law established or against the administration of justice;
- To excite Nigerians to attempt to procure the alteration of any matter in Nigeria as by law established otherwise than by constitutional means;
- To raise discontent and disaffection amongst His Majesty's subjects or amongst Nigerians;
- To promote feelings of ill-will and enmity between classes of the population of Nigerians.

(Sobowale, 1985: 29)

In a move to tighten the noose on the critical press, the 1916 Criminal Code Ordinance also removed the option of fine as punishment for the publication of false news by a newspaper replacing it with an automatic two-year prison term on conviction. Equally disturbing is the 1909 Seditious Ordinance's sweeping definition of false news as a "statement, rumor, or report" published or circulated:

- With intent to cause or which is likely to cause any officer of the Government of Southern Nigeria or any other person otherwise in the service of His Majesty to disregard or fail in his duty as such officer or servant of His Majesty.
- With intent to cause or which is likely to cause fear or alarm to the public or to any section of the public whereby any person may be induced to commit an offence against the State or against the public tranquility, or
- With intent to incite or which is likely to incite, any class or community of persons to commit any offence against any other class or community....

(Sobowale, 1985: 29-30)

The burgeoning nationalist press survived this repressive environment partly because of the oversight of the Colonial Office back in England who not only approved every major piece of legislation proposed for the colonies but also tried to rein in the most overzealous of its field officers. The indigenous press exploited this as much as possible by appealing to the liberal freedoms on which modern Britain is built and exposing the double standards in the colony. This worked to some degree as some of the most egregious press laws were sparsely used. For instance, the *Seditious Offences Ordinance* saw only three prosecutions in about 25 years (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 29, Sobowale, 1985: 30). Besides, the colonial administration was reluctant to make heroes of the journalists whose political activism endeared them to the people. Members of the

public not only contributed towards the legal defense of incarcerated journalists but also often showed their solidarity through street protests (Sobowale, 1985: 30).

If the first generation of the Nigerian press belonged to printer-publishers; the second generation after the 1900s was dominated by publisher-politicians most of who were doctors, lawyers, chemists, engineers, architects and surveyors but hardly ever trained journalists (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 30). The 1922 Clifford Constitution which, for the first time allowed the formation of political parties gave a new impetus to the nascent nationalist press both in terms of financial security and a broadened horizon in which inter-party squabbles sometimes took precedence over the excesses of the colonial administration. According to media historian Fred Omu, “as African nationalism acquired momentum and inspired constitutional changes which produced African participation in government, and as the nationalist parties increasingly turned against one another, British administrators apparently became less disposed to limit the freedom of the press” (cited in Golding and Elliott, 1979: 30). Two of the major newspapers of the 1920s were the *Daily Times* which was established in 1926 by foreign business interests in Lagos and widely regarded as the first successful daily and the *Lagos Daily News* which was set up in 1927 by pioneer nationalist and leader of the National Democratic Party (NDP) Herbert Macaulay. With an emphasis on large circulation targeting the growing literate but still limited public, the dailies dropped their price to a penny. And while the *Daily Times* enjoyed advertising support from both the expatriate business community and the colonial government which it largely supported, the *Lagos Daily News* like the other party press had to rely on the patronage of political affiliates and supporters as “there was little local advertising revenue, except from the purveyors of quack medicines, and expatriate firms were loathe to support the more virulent anti-government press despite its circulation” (Golding and Elliot, 1979: 30).

Prior to the early 1930s, Nigerian journalism was defined more by its political activism than the craft and professionalism of its practitioners. However, that gradually began to change with the return of more Nigerians who had gone abroad to further their education. Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe who became Nigeria’s first president at independence in 1960 is arguably the most influential of this generation of nationalist newspaper publishers. Armed with political science and journalism degrees from American universities where he was influenced by the political philosophy of the Negro Movement, Zik as he was fondly called, first honed his journalistic skills in the then Gold Coast (now

Ghana) where he edited the *African Morning Post*. Upon his return to Nigeria in 1937, he founded the Zik Press Limited, a newspaper chain with a strong presence in Nigeria's three main regions. Among the chain's leading titles (all published in English) were the highly influential *West African Pilot* in Lagos (1937), the *Eastern Nigerian Guardian* in Port Harcourt (1940), the *Southern Nigerian Defender* in Warri (1943), the *Nigerian Spokesman* in Onitsha (1943) and the *Daily Comet* in Kano (1944). Zik not only pioneered the transformation of the prevalent party press into limited liability companies but also introduced a number of stylistic innovations into Nigerian journalism. These include aggressive marketing, banner headlines across the pages, emphasis on human interest stories, lavish use of photographs, and a more subdued prose style with the exception of political stories where sensationalism remained the norm. These innovations along with the largely pan-Africanist focus of the Zik papers in their early years made them instant market leaders with the *Pilot* reaching the unprecedented circulation figure of 12,000 by 1940 (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 30, Sobowale, 1985: 30-1, Bourgault, 1995: 155). Another major development of this period was the emergence of British press baron Cecil King of the Mirror Group who acquired the *Daily and Sunday Times* in 1947. The acquisition helped turn the *Times* into a dominant force in the industry in terms of innovative production techniques. Equipped with its own rotary printing machine and state of the art photo-processing and typesetting equipment, the paper pioneered flashy tabloid Fleet Street style journalism in Nigeria gaining distinct edge over its indigenous competitors. The *Times* status as the leading newspaper of the period was underscored by its circulation figures, which rose from 25,000 in 1951 to 120,000 in 1965 (Bourgault, 1995: 156, Hachten, 1993: 16).

However, as self-rule loomed, the nationalist politician-publishers of the period blatantly aligned their newspapers with their largely ethnically based political parties. For example, from the late 1940s onwards, the ten newspapers owned by Zik had become the official organs of his party, the National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons (NCNC) which has its stronghold in his Eastern (Ibo) region. Similarly, another frontline nationalist, Chief Obafemi Awolowo of the Western (Yoruba) based party—the Action Group (AG) founded the *Nigerian Tribune* (1949) and the *Daily Service* (1951) primarily to advance his party's interests. Soon after, a number of newspapers also affiliated to the party were established in various regions of the country. By the late 1940s too, a regional newspaper chain had emerged from the stable of the Northern

Nigerian Government-owned Gaskiya Corporation, which was originally set-up to promote the spread of vernacular languages in the region. The corporation not only revamped its main Hausa language newspaper, the *Gaskiya ta fir Kwabo* but also introduced a new English title the *Nigerian Citizen* along with vernacular publications in three of the region's major languages—Fulani, Tiv and Kanuri. The publications as expected became the official organs of the region's major political party, the Northern People's Congress (NPC) in the pre-independent fight for power. Thus with the exception of the *Daily Times* (originally established in 1926 by expatriate businessmen and purchased in 1947 by the British newspaper conglomerate, the International Publishing Corporation—publishers of the *Mirror*), every newspaper in Nigeria at independence in 1960, either fully or partially identified with a political party (Sobowale, 1985: 31, Bourgault, 1995: 155-6). This includes the *Daily Express*, which was the product of a 1958 partnership between the Action Group political party and British-Canadian press baron Lord Roy Thompson. Financial losses along with a violent post-independence leadership fight which ultimately led to the break-up of the party forced Thompson in 1965 to withdraw his stake in the *Daily Express* (Bourgault, 1995: 156, Golding and Elliott, 1979: 31, Ainslie, 1967: 70). The IPC/Mirror Group maintained its 47.5% controlling stake in the *Daily Times* until 1971 when it sold the shares to the public as part of the effort toward indigenizing Nigerian businesses.¹

Unlike the print media, broadcasting in Nigeria, from the outset, took a decidedly statist trajectory in which governments at federal and regional (later State) levels had a monopoly of the new medium. Broadcasting was introduced in Nigeria on December 19, 1932 when the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) launched the 'Empire Service' from Daventry, England with Lagos (Nigeria) as one of its overseas monitoring stations. True to its name, the service was primarily geared towards empire building as it sought to develop economic, political and cultural links between Britain and its overseas colonies (Mackay, 1964: 1). Despite the project's popularity, the economic depression of the early 1930s hindered its expansion. Instead, the BBC encouraged existing overseas stations to re-broadcast the service, which in many cases became the institutional

¹ The IPC shares were sold to the public after the Lagos Stock Exchange blocked an attempt by the General Gowon administration to take controlling stake in the newspaper through the government-owned National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON) (see Agbaje, 1992: 233-4).

backbone for radio broadcasting in the colonies. To this end, the Nigerian Posts and Telegraphs Department was tasked in 1934 with developing a radio distribution system of BBC programs to the major population centers. Following a brief experimental phase, the Lagos station in 1936 commenced the distribution of radio programs through rediffusion boxes to subscriber homes or public listening centers. This was modeled after the popular Radio Distribution Service (RDS) used in England in the 1920s. The service in its early years was limited to three major cities—Lagos, Kano and Ibadan—but quickly grew in popularity that by the mid to late-1940s it had been extended to most major urban centers. The RDS focus on urban, densely populated areas was primarily a consequence of cost. By 1948, there were about 12,000 radio receivers in Nigeria along with an expanding RDS subscriber base (Mackay, 1964: 1-5). The Second World War further underscored the propagandist value of the service to the British Empire as it sought to mobilize the colonies towards the war effort. This required translating some of the signals into pidgin English and the local languages in an effort to reach the vast majority of Nigerians who were either unable to read or had limited access to the few and poorly circulating newspapers of the period (Offor, 2002: 125). The key legislation under which the RDS operated was the 1935 Wireless Telegraphy Ordinance, which granted the (colonial) Posts and Telegraph Department monopoly over all aspects of broadcasting and telephony. However, state monopoly of the new radio broadcast medium was by no means unusual as most countries (with the exception of the USA) faced with such technological challenges as spectrum scarcity took the same route. But there were also political reasons given the enormous potential of the new medium to influence public opinion.

Following the 1949 report of the Turner-Byron Commission set up to determine the broadcast needs of British West African colonies and how best to address them, Nigeria began the transition from program re-distribution to actual broadcasting with the establishment of the Nigerian Broadcasting Service (NBS) on April 1, 1951. The NBS was conceived as a dynamic mix of national and regional stations to reflect Nigeria's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. The need for a broadcasting service that fosters Nigeria's unity while also recognizing the diversity of its peoples' was particularly germane given the impasse over the 1951 Constitution and the near implosion of the country into three largely ethnic nationalities (Mackay, 1964: 6-13). Even at that, the nascent NBS still primarily served British colonial interests chief among which was

keeping Nigeria together as a country; a highly complex and multi-ethnic entity it created in 1914 out of crass economic and political expediency (Falola, 1999: 68-9). However, the looming inevitability of self-rule following further constitutional conferences in the early 1950s along with the grave implications of the abuse of radio in an intensely multi-ethnic entity like Nigeria caused the colonial administration to transform the NBS from a pliable government organ into an independent public service corporation in the honored tradition of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

The *Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) Ordinance No. 39 of 1956* among other things charged the corporation “to provide, as a public service, independent and impartial broadcasting services by means of wireless telegraphy and by television for general reception within Nigeria” and “to ensure that the services which it provides, when considered as a whole, reflect the unity of Nigeria as a Federation and at the same time give adequate expression to the culture, characteristics, affairs and opinions of the people of each Region of the Federation” (Mackay, 1964: 116-7). Just like the BBC, the NBC was to be insulated from government control and interference. The corporation commenced operation on April 1, 1957 and was run by a national Board of Governors and three regional boards appointed by the Governor-General. While the regional boards ensured adequate representation of their regions in programming as well as the autonomy of regional services and stations, the Board of Governors had primary responsibility for the corporation’s overall policies and was answerable to parliament through a designated Minister. The day-to-day running of the corporation was vested on a Board of Management made up of the Director-General, heads of the various departments and the three Regional Controllers. The national and regional Boards were composed of representatives of both levels of government with four-fifths of them (24 of 30 members) appointees of regional governments (Mackay, 1964: 52-3, 67). While Section 29 sub-section 4 of the Ordinance empowered the Governor-General in Council to stop the corporation from broadcasting certain items, the (last colonial) government never exercised that power just as it did not try to use its budgetary leverage to stifle the corporation financially (Mackay, 1964: 66). However, the corporation’s relative autonomy became severely compromised barely a year after independence (October 1, 1960) when parliament in August 1961 controversially amended the broadcasting ordinance empowering

the Minister responsible for broadcasting to give general and specific directions to the Corporation on matters of policy or matters appearing to the Minister to be of public interest and also to enable him, after consultation with the appropriate regional government in the case of regional Boards, to make recommendations to the Governor-General in Council as to the appointment of all members of the Corporation...

(Mackay, 1964: 66)

The deliberately loosely worded amendment ended any hope of a truly independent public service broadcasting culture in Nigeria as successive governments—civilian and military—appropriated the medium for parochial political ends.

Ironically, the granting of internal self-rule to the Eastern and Western Regions in 1957 sparked a simultaneous push for regional government owned broadcasting outlets to exist alongside the fledgling NBC. The push for regional government owned broadcasting entities was fueled by the perception (real or imagined) among opposition parties that the NBC coverage often favored the ruling Northern People's Congress (NPC). This was despite the entrenched regional structure of the corporation in which the three semi-autonomous regional boards (East, West and North) controlled programming relative to the peculiar needs of each region. Yet, it was the overt partisanship of the opposition controlled regional governments' broadcasting outlets in the Eastern and Western regions that prompted the 1961 amendment of the broadcasting ordinance to give the federal government more direct control over the NBC (Mackay, 1964: 66-9).

Just as the NBC partnered with the BBC in its early years, each regional government broadcasting entity sought a foreign partner, who aside from providing technical skills and a share of the initial capital and operating expenses also managed the corporation on contract basis. The regional government-owned stations were independent of the federal government whose influence was limited to such purely technical matters as the allocation of frequencies and the location of stations. First off the block was the Western Regional Government Broadcasting Corporation, which was to provide both television and sound broadcasting but surprisingly began with the former following the launch of Western Nigeria Television (WNTV) in October 1959. It also happened to be the first television station in the continent as its "First in Africa" slogan proudly proclaimed. Radio (sound) broadcasting followed in May 1960 with the establishment of the Western Nigeria Broadcasting Service (WNBS). The WNTV-BS—

an acronym for the corporation's television and radio services—was a partnership between the British firm Overseas Diffusion Limited and the regional government controlled by the main federal opposition, Yoruba dominated party—the Action Group (AG). The Eastern Nigeria regional government controlled by the National Congress of Nigerian Citizens (NCNC) which is largely Igbo dominated followed shortly on October 1, 1960 with the launch of the Eastern Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (ENBC), a combined sound and television service. This brought to two the number of television broadcast services in Nigeria at independence both of which were owned by regional governments. It was not until 1962 that the NBC set up its own television service, the NBC Television, which was managed on contract by an American company, the National Broadcasting Company International Limited. The contract ended in 1967 when the television service was integrated with the parent corporation as NBC-TV. The Northern Regional Government in the Hausa-Fulani heartland controlled by the ruling federal party, the Northern Peoples' Congress (NPC), was the last to join the regional broadcasting bandwagon when it established in March 1962 the Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria Limited (BCNNL); an audio and visual partnership with two British companies Granada Television and EMI Radio. The partnership approach meant the regional stations were, from the outset, conceived as quasi commercial ventures, which unlike the NBC relied exclusively on government grants. This caused the NBC to embrace advertisements in 1961 even as it still relied substantially on government subvention. Unfortunately, the broadcasting partnerships between the regional governments and the foreign companies were short-lived for a number of reasons top among which was the conflict between the primarily commercial goals of the partner companies and the crass partisan political motives of the regional governments; the latter which helped foster the highly toxic political environment of Nigeria's short-lived first republic (Mackay, 1964: 61-3, Golding and Elliott, 1979: 43-4, Bourgault, 1995: 132). For instance, by 1961, barely two years into the partnership between the Western Regional Government and Overseas Redifussion, the relationship had soured to the point that the former had to buy out the latter. In the case of the Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria (BCNN), the shares of the two British partners—Granada TV and EMI Radio—were acquired in 1970 by the six new states carved out of the old Northern Region (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 43-4).

Although the regional government-owned broadcasting corporations may have brought with them some innovation and creativity with respect to programming, they were unarguably more complicit than the NBC in using broadcasting for parochial and partisan political ends which evidently was the primary reason why they were established. And while there are obvious benefits in autonomous regional broadcasting, “the danger exists that divided control in a developing society may promote regional feeling instead of encouraging the desire to live and act together” (Mackay, 1964: 63-4). Indeed, the often ethnically charged and party-driven partisan broadcasting between regional government-owned outlets and the federally controlled NBC contributed in no small measure to the political turbulence and early demise of Nigeria’s first republic. Such partisanship grew worse with the complete *Nigerianisation* of the NBC following the exit of the last BBC seconded expatriate Director-General, Mr. Ian Mackay in 1964.

As with broadcasting, the former nationalist press which had metamorphosed into the party press in the years leading up to independence continued with that partisan tradition as the parties sought to consolidate their grip on power in their respective regions of influence. According to Idowu Sobowale (1985: 32)

Upon independence, petty jealousies afflicted the newspapers. Their owners and editors could not perceive issues beyond the confines of party ideologies or ethnic boundaries. It immediately became clear that what had apparently united them was the common enemy—colonialism. Because none of the three major political parties had a firm footing in any region other than its home base, even though each had a considerable following in the other regions, the newspapers could not promote national goals. Because the newspapers were toeing party lines in their coverage of events and the opinions they reflected, it became difficult, if not impossible, for the federal government to get its activities adequately covered by all newspapers

(Sobowale, 1985: 32)

For example, in the Western Region, the Action Group (AG) led government which already had the support of the *Nigerian Tribune* and the *Daily Service* (both owned by the party leader Chief Awolowo) established the *Daily Sketch* bringing to at least three, the number of newspapers that directly promoted the party’s interests. Leading up to independence, the newspapers under the Zik group had become the organs of his party—the NCNC (now renamed National Council of Nigerian Citizens) and continued with that role even as the NCNC led Eastern regional government established the *Nigerian Outlook* to further bolster itself. In the Northern Region, the Northern

Peoples' Congress (NPC) led government also took control of the regional newspaper, the *Nigerian Citizen* and renamed it the *New Nigerian*. Feeling outflanked, the federal government—a rather tenuous coalition between the Northern Peoples' Congress (senior partner) and the NCNC launched in 1961 the Nigerian National Press Limited which published the *Morning Post* and the *Sunday Post* newspapers. Although the Post was established in part to challenge the market dominance of the foreign-owned *Daily Times*, the primary driving force was political—to counter the increasingly vituperative and incendiary reporting of the regional government press and their affiliated party newspapers in the Eastern and Western regions where the opposition parties were in power. The vast majority of the editorial staff of the government newspapers at both the federal and regional levels; were civil servants drawn from the ministries of information who lacked both the expertise and editorial independence commonly associated with professional journalists. Quite often, they enthusiastically embraced their roles as partisan hacks rather than professional journalists thus compromising their integrity and the potential growth of their publications (Sobowale, 1985: 31-2).

The hyper-partisan media environment in both the print and electronic media helped fuel a succession of major political crises that pushed the nascent republic ever closer to the brink. First in the precipitous chain of events was the 1962 crises in the Western Region, which was triggered by intense power struggle among the leadership of the region's dominant party—the Action Group. Many of the party's top brass wound up in prison following their conviction on treasonable felony charges. This was followed by the stalemate arising from the hotly disputed results of the 1963 census on the basis of which national revenues are allocated. There was also the bickering over the results of the December 1964 general elections which allegedly were massively rigged. Similar allegations of massive rigging also greeted the results of the 1965 Western regional elections leading to the total breakdown of law and order in the region.

In response to the earlier political upheavals, the federal government in 1964 enacted the *Newspapers (Amendment) Act*, which prescribed stiff penalties for any newspaper, publisher or journalist that published any statement, rumor or report either known or suspected to be false. The law came into effect despite very intense opposition from the press. Curiously, the amendment strengthened sections of the *Criminal Code Ordinance of 1916* and the *Newspaper Ordinance of 1917* dealing with the publication of false news, both of which the nationalists had denounced decades earlier for being

inimical to press freedom. Similarly, the colonial sedition laws were not only adopted both by the federal and regional governments but were also frequently invoked to keep critical, often opposition newspapers in check. Also in the mix of the anti-press laws of Nigeria's first republic was the *Official Secrets Act of 1962*, which outlawed the publication of 'sensitive' government documents that could compromise national interest and security. As the political crises worsened, laws were passed in some regions banning the circulation of critical/opposition newspapers with the offices of such papers also sometimes vandalized. This was the prevailing state of affairs when the military took over power in Nigeria's first coup on January 15, 1966 in which several prominent politicians and top military officers were killed. A counter coup on July 29, 1966 by disgruntled Northern soldiers convinced of the ethnic motivation of the original coupists led to a precipitous chain of events that plunged the country into a 30-month civil war from 1967 to 1970 (Sobowale, 1985: 32-3, Ogbondah, 1994: 37-41, Ekpu, 1999: 57-8). Despite the apparent profusion of publications, it is painfully obvious that the Nigerian press during the first 6 years of independence was hardly a paragon of democratic pluralism. As Rosalynde Aisline explains, "the confusion of Nigerian political life, where party divisions do not often clearly reflect differences of principle so much as regional and tribal loyalties, or conflicts of personality, tends to produce a journalism of personal and party abuse rather than of political debate" (Aisline, 1967: 65).

The emergence of military governments naturally led to more restrictive media policies and legislations. For instance, on taking over power following the abortive coup of January 15, 1966 that effectively ended Nigeria's short-lived first republic, General Ironsi quickly promulgated a number of key decrees that gave his regime absolute powers in administering the country. Among these were *The State of Emergency Decree, 1966* which, authorized the military government to arrest and detain any citizen without warrant and for undisclosed reasons; *Decree No. 1 of 1966, Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree* which, suspended and modified certain sections of the federal and regional constitutions vesting in the military administrators at both levels of government the power to make laws. The latter decree effectively dissolved the legislature transferring its law making powers to the military high command. It also ousted the jurisdiction of the courts to entertain any challenge on the validity of the decree. Yet another of the regime's draconian legislation was the *State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 3 of 1966* which allowed the regime to detain anyone

considered a security risk for a period not exceeding 6 months. Both the suspension of constitution and the state security detention of persons' decrees would become the staple of successive military regimes in Nigeria. General Ironsi in his roughly 6 months in power also promulgated the *Defamatory and Offensive Publications Decree No. 44 of 1966* which outlawed the publication of any material (images, texts, songs/music, words etc) capable of causing disaffection in any section of the country. Although the defamatory decree appeared inimical to press freedom, it was particularly geared towards deescalating ethnic tensions following the predominantly Northern casualties of the January 15, 1966 coup and media reports that southern Igbos—the ethnic origin of most of the coup leaders—used recorded music and photographs to mock northern Hausa-Fulanis of their loss. The various decrees under Ironsi resulted in the deportation of many foreign (mostly British) journalists and the detention of some local journalists as well as politicians (Ogbondah, 1994: 41-7). On a more positive note, the administration through *Decree No. 2 of 1966* repealed the various regional laws banning the circulation of opposition newspapers and vested the regulation of newspapers with the federal military government (Ogbondah, 1994: 48, Sobowale, 1985: 33). Overall, the General Ironsi regime did not overly repress the press despite the volatile political situation it was saddled with. His death in the counter coup of July 29, 1966 masterminded by mutinous northern soldiers brought General Yakubu Gowon to power amid escalating ethnic tension and a subsisting national state of emergency.

The new military government of General Gowon not only inherited the decrees enacted by its predecessor many of which it reinforced, but also promulgated new ones aimed at consolidating its stranglehold on power. These include *The Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree of 1967*, which vested the executive and legislative powers of government on the Supreme Military Council and the *Parliament (Dissolution) Decree No. 12 of 1967* that formally dissolved the federal and regional parliaments both of which had been in abeyance since the January 15, 1966 coup. There was also *The State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 11 of 1967*, which empowered the regime to detain anyone for up to 6 months for the undefined offence of 'indiscipline'. Even more threatening was *Decree No. 24 of 1967, Armed Forces and Police (Special Powers) Decree* which, allowed any police officer from the rank of an inspector or any member of the military to arrest without warrant and to detain indefinitely anyone considered a threat to national security. The designated officers also

had powers to enter, search and seize any property without a warrant. Decree 24 which came into effect on June 21, 1967 was a direct response to the secession of the Eastern Region which had on May 30, 1967 declared itself the Republic of Biafra; provoking a brutal 30-month civil war as a result. In an effort to prevent the looming crises, the Gowon administration had earlier enacted *Decree No. 17 of 1967, Newspapers (Prohibition of Circulation) Decree* which gave it powers to ban the circulation of any newspapers considered a threat to national interest and security. This was amid growing ethnic tension and mutual suspicion among the 4 regions following the January and July coups; a situation the government feared would worsen if newspapers were allowed to circulate without restriction. Further underscoring the Gowon regime's over-sensitivity to the press was *Decree No. 53, Trade Dispute Decree 1967*, which prohibited the publication of any materials capable of causing public alarm or industrial unrest including the coverage of demonstrations, lockouts and industrial strikes (Ogbondah, 1994: 55-62).

The replacement of party politics by military rule led to the proliferation of state-owned newspapers with most of the party press losing relevance (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 31). In particular, General Gowon's May 1967 creation of 12 states from the ethnically fractious three regions, a number that rose to 19 in 1976 saw most of the new states establish their own newspapers and in many cases broadcast corporations too (Sobowale, 1985: 33-4, Ogbondah, 1994:83). The Nigerian civil war (May 1967 to January 1970) in which the rest of the country was united against the secessionist former Eastern Region (now the Republic of Biafra) struck a patriotic chord in the federalist press who felt a sense of civic responsibility to preserve the unity of the country. The fact that many of the papers were now government owned and operating under a military imposed state of emergency made it easier to mobilize them for the war efforts. In fact by the mid-1970s, there were only four non-government-owned newspapers in Nigeria, the *West African Pilot*, which eventually closed shop in 1978 after nearly a decade of struggle, the *Daily Express* (which ceased publication in 1979), the *Nigerian Tribune* which (until the return of party politics in 1979) had transformed into a respectable newspaper from being the official organ of the now outlawed political party Action Group, and the *Punch*—a racy soft-sell popular for its human interest stories (Sobowale, 1985: 34, Ogbondah, 1994: 82). However, it was not all rosy for the state-owned press. A good example was the trail blazing federal government owned daily, the

Morning Post which along with the *Sunday Post* was rested in 1972 due to lack of readership owing to its rabidly pro-government stance (Edeani, 1985: 47, Sobowale, 1985: 32). While the military regime of General Gowon (1966-1975) was not overly zealous about gagging the press, the numerous statutory restrictions in place generally fostered a climate of fear resulting in a high degree of docility and self-censorship among media organizations (Sobowale, 1985: 33). Such acquiescence was largely the norm during the emergency years of the civil war and its immediate aftermath except in a few cases where parochial ethnic or strategic interests motivated some state government-owned newspapers to be critical of the policies of other state governments (see Ogbondah, 1994: 24-5).

Yet, two of the most egregious press violations of the period occurred as a result of what patently were innocuous acts of news reportage. In 1968, Segun Sowemimo, a journalist with the Western Nigerian Broadcasting Service (WNBS) was severely beaten on the orders of the military Governor of the region Colonel Adeyinka Adebayo for taking photographs of the governor's wife on the dance floor with another man at an official function. He would eventually die of gangrene following long spell in hospital (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 67-8). In the second and more celebrated case, Minere Amakiri, the chief correspondent of the *Nigerian Observer* in Rivers State was arrested and detained for 27 hours during which he was stripped, severely lashed with horsewhip and had his head and beard shaved with a blunt pocket knife. His offence: writing a story that 'embarrassed' the young Rivers State military governor, Commander Alfred Diette-Spiff on his 31st birthday. The offensive story published in the July 30, 1973 edition of the paper was basically a report of a news conference held by the President of the State Teachers' Union who had threatened that union members would resign en mass if the state government continued to ignore their demands for improved conditions of service (Ogbondah, 1994: 73-6, Golding and Elliott, 1979: 68). The Amakiri incident was promptly and roundly denounced by both the Nigerian press and professional media organizations who among other things called for the governor's resignation, a formal and public apology to Mr. Amakiri, a public inquiry into the incident and the punishment of all those involved in the act. With the government acceding to none of the demands, Amakiri, with the help of the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) launched a civil law suit

and won substantial monetary compensation for the physical and psychological abuse he suffered (Ogbondah, 1994: 76-81, Golding and Elliott, 1979: 68).²

As to be expected, the military takeover of power in 1966 also had dramatic impact on broadcasting as the NBC became more integrated into the civil service under the aegis of the Statutory Corporations Services Commission further eroding its independence. The new arrangement dramatically altered the composition of the corporation's board, which now consisted of the Director-General, officials from the major relevant ministries and a representative of the military (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 42-3). On a somewhat positive note, the 1967 creation of 12 states out of the original three regions by the General Gowon administration helped diffuse the deep and intensely divisive ethnic affiliations of the old regional political structure. Beside, the unified command structure of the military meant that the primary allegiance of the military Governors who now controlled the regional broadcasting corporations was to the military high command. The subsequent descent of Nigeria into a 30-month civil war in 1967 and the state of emergency it engendered saw all broadcasting outlets on both sides of the conflict maximally deployed for propaganda purposes. The former Eastern Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (ENBC) in the secessionist Igbo enclave became Radio Biafra and was particularly effective in mobilizing public support for the separatist cause. The NBC was no less complicit on the federal side. The corporation's Annual Reports for 1967-1968 and 1969-1970 touted its propagandist contributions to the overall war efforts (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 50).

Following the end of the war in January 1970, the military government now required of the broadcasters a commitment to its post-war efforts geared towards 'reconciliation, reconstruction and rehabilitation (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 50). For example, at an August 1970 public inquiry on the role of the NBC, then Federal Commissioner for Information and Labor, Chief Anthony Enahoro argued that the

² Other notable press violations of the Gowon era include the November 1966 proscription of two rabble-raising and largely fringe publications in the Western region, the *Sunday Star* and a vernacular publication *Imole Owuro*; the March 1969 detention of Lateef Jakande, editor of the *Nigerian Tribune* for an editorial calling for a return to democratic rule in the middle of the civil war; and the brief closure of the *Daily Times* Group in September 1969 and 1971. There were also numerous instances of journalists being interrogated over stories the regime found offensive, particularly in the years following the civil war (see Ogbondah, 1994: 67-73, 81-2) when it reneged on its promise to return the country to civil rule and instead increasingly became obsessed with self-perpetuation.

corporation's policies and programs "should be designed and broadcast in a way and manner more in harmony with the interest and aspirations of a people who have passed through crises, who still face national dangers and who have ambitions to build a united and modern state" (cited in Elegalem, 1985: 69). As a public broadcaster, even if only in name, the NBC programming should reflect all that and more. Yet, the sad reality of the corporation's first decade as articulated by its Director-General at the same 1974 inquiry was that of a "grossly underfinanced, underrated, over-hampered and over-interrupted public Corporation, prevented from discharging its statutory functions when it is convenient for the Government to be oblivious of the provisions of the Act of parliament under which the Corporation was set up..." (Elegalem, 1985: 70). Government control was mostly asserted through the appointment of loyalists to the corporation's board and top management as well as through budgetary allocations given its primary dependence on state funding (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 50).

With the NBC effectively subsumed under the civil service, the military government's development priorities became entrenched in the corporation's broadcasting policies of the 1970s. For instance, the 1970-1974 'National Development Plan' assigned two key responsibilities to the 'information services' (i.e. government supported media): fostering national unity by promoting the spirit of reconciliation in the light of the war and mobilizing public support for national development effort through the dissemination of appropriate information (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 67). Consequently, the NBC in April 1973 issued a 9-point statement of objectives in which it identified its primary objectives to include providing "efficient broadcasting to the whole Federation of Nigeria, based on national objectives and aspirations"; contributing "to the development of Nigerian society"; promoting "national unity by ensuring a balanced presentation of views from all parts of Nigeria" and ensuring "the prompt delivery of accurate information to the people". These are without doubt laudable goals that fall within the core responsibilities of a public broadcaster. Yet the apparent disconnect between these admirable principles as enunciated and the reality of the corporation's broadcasting practice begs the question: whose interest is really served? The answer perhaps lies in what the Corporation's Head of News told a management seminar in 1974: "in a developing country like Nigeria, broadcasting must offer a continuous flow of information to the people in order to sustain their right to know about government intentions and actions.... The replenishment of their knowledge in this way; facilitates mass

mobilization for national development programs” (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 65). Ignored in all these, particularly for a supposed public broadcaster is the very undemocratic process through which the so called national development programs were articulated and how much they resonate with the people for whom they are supposedly meant for.

As General Gowon’s regime grew more unpopular, the privately owned newspapers (the *Daily Times* and the *Nigerian Tribune* in particular) stepped up criticism of the government forcing in 1974 the resignation of the Minister for Communications Mr. J.S. Tarka over allegations of corruption. The Minister’s forced resignation and the uptick in press criticism prompted the Inspector-General of Police Mr. Kam Selem to accuse the press of “mounting a campaign of blackmail” against the government by publishing materials “capable of whipping up sectional sentiments or disrupting law and order”; a charge dismissed by the Chairman of the Newspaper Proprietors Association Lateef Jakande who argued that in the context of a military government with no formal opposition the press acts as “the parliament of the people” (Arnold: 1977: 163-4).

Profligate public spending spurred by the oil boom of the 1970s, widespread corruption among military administrators and high ranking civil servants along with General Gowon’s decision to renege on his pledge to return the country to democratic rule by 1976 saw his government toppled on July 29, 1975. His successor, the visionary General Murtala Mohammed was only six months in office when he was assassinated on February 13, 1976 in an unsuccessful coup. But in that brief spell, he had set up the Corrupt Practices Investigation Bureau and a Special Tribunal to handle cases of corrupt enrichment by public officers with the guilty forced to forfeit their loot. He also established the Public Complaints Commission, which encouraged citizens to squeal on corrupt public officials. Following Gen. Mohammed’s assassination, his deputy, General Olusegun Obasanjo took over the reins of government and pledged to continue with the administration’s cardinal policies of probity, fiscal discipline and a transition to civil rule program that culminated in Nigeria’s second republic in 1979 (Falola, 1998: 147-153). While its success in the fight against corruption was at best spotty, it was the successful return of the country to democratic rule that became the defining legacy of the Murtala/Obasanjo administration.

Like the military regimes before it, it suspended the constitution and assumed absolute legislative and detentive powers. Yet it’s blatant effort to control the press, particularly in the postwar, non-emergency political climate cast doubts on its often-

stated commitment to transparency. One of the regime's most pointedly anti-press laws was *Decree No. 11 of 1976, Public Officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Decree* which, as the title indicates, sought to protect public officers from false accusations by the media. Promulgated on May 11, 1976 (three months after the assassination of Gen. Mohammed) but made retroactive to July 29, 1975 when the regime came to power, the decree stated among other things:

any person who publishes or reproduces in any form, whether written or otherwise, any statement, rumor or report alleging or intended to be understood as alleging that a public officer has in any manner corruptly enriched himself (sic) or any other person, being a statement, rumor or report which is false, in any material particular, shall be guilty of an offence under this decree and liable on conviction to be sentenced to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, without the option of fine. (Ogbondah, 1994: 63)

The trial to be conducted in a High Court not only placed the burden of proof of the allegations on the accused but also recognized the right of the maligned public officer to seek civil remedies. The decree was promulgated despite the existence of sedition and libel laws, which more than adequately dealt with such matters. However, the regime had a very personal interest in enacting the law. Shortly after assuming office, in his largely fringe monthly magazine the *African Spark*, a political activist and law teacher, Dr. Obarogie Ohonbamu had insinuated that the head of state Gen. Mohammed was corrupt. Writing in the Volume 3, 1975 edition of the magazine, Ohonbamu argued that for General Mohammed's anti-corruption crusade to be taken seriously, he must first declare his assets and address rumors he had corruptly enriched himself in the form of property and cars. Determined to clear his name, Gen. Mohammed agreed to testify in court but the case did not proceed as Ohonbamu recanted the allegations and apologized. The retroactive nature of Decree No. 11 was a pre-emptive effort by the Gen. Obasanjo to nip similar allegations against officials of his regime. But it had a chilling effect not only on investigative reporting but also on whistle-blowers who had to weigh the consequences of making allegations of wrongdoing against top government officials (Ogbondah, 1994: 62-4, 122, Ekpu, 1999: 60). Decree 11 which re-emerged in an even more severe form in the early 1980s underscored the rather tense and adversarial relationship between the press and the Gen. Mohammed/Obasanjo administration; a situation made more curious by the regime's anti-corruption rhetoric and pledge to hand over power to a democratically elected government in 1979.

The Murtala/Obasanjo regime was also instrumental in rekindling the waning influence of the federal government in the print media sector. Desperately in need of an influential national newspaper through which to propagate its policies following the demise of the *Morning Post* in 1972, the regime on September 1, 1975 forcibly acquired 60% shares of the privately-owned print giant, the Daily Times of Nigeria Limited (DTN). The takeover was facilitated by transferring the acquired shares to the federal government owned National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON). Aside from the *Daily Times* which at the time was Nigeria's widest circulating newspaper, other major titles from the Times group include *Sunday Times*, *Business Times*, *Times International*, *Evening Times*, *Lagos Weekend*, *Sporting Record*, *Headlines*, *Home Studies*, *Women's World*, *Spear* and the *Nigerian Year Book*. Strangely, the formalization of the takeover did not happen until four years later when the regime, on the threshold of handing over power to an elected civilian government, promulgated *The Daily Times of Nigeria Limited (Transfer of Certain Shares) Decree No. 101 of 1979* which threatened anyone that challenges the transaction with one year imprisonment without the option of a fine (Ogbondah, 1994: 65, 82). Shortly after acquiring the majority shares of the Daily Times Group in 1975, the federal military government also took over total ownership of the New Nigerian Limited, the most influential newspaper group in the north, which until then was owned by the six northern states. Among its titles were the daily *New Nigerian*, the *New Nigerian on Sunday* and the popular vernacular newspaper *Gaskiya Tafi Kwabo* (Ogbondah, 1994: 65, 82-3). Mindful of public apprehension over the forced takeovers of both newspaper chains, the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime pledged to respect their editorial independence even as it hoped that their reportage and commentary will be constructive and geared towards serving the national interest at all times (Ogbondah, 1994, 65, 82-3). Not surprisingly, this would prove to be a hollow promise as both formerly vibrant media organizations gradually slid into irrelevance having been reduced to the mouthpiece of successive federal governments so much that by the mid-1990s they were literally on life support and published infrequently.

Ironically, as the regime forcibly took over the two leading national newspapers, it also tried to muzzle the critical press. A good example is the June 1978 proscription of the sometimes vitriolic fortnightly newsmagazine *Newbreed*; the only publication of its kind at the time. The regime was particularly riled by two lead stories in the mid-June issue of the magazine. The first story alleged a gang-up against prominent politician and

opposition leader in the first republic, Chief Obafemi Awolowo who reemerged as the leader and presidential candidate of a new party—the Unity Party of Nigeria. The regime saw the story as capable of exacerbating ethnic tensions thus undermining its transition to civil rule program which at the time of the publication, was about a year away from completion. The second story titled “The Uses and Abuses of the Nigerian Security Organization” offered both a stinging critique of the excesses of the dreaded national security agency and suggestions on how it could be reformed to prevent abuses (Ogbondah, 1994: 64, 86, Abayomi, 2003: 111, Ekpu, 1999: 60). The proscription which, was for a period of two years, came on the heels of the magazine’s earlier run-ins with the Obasanjo government. For instance, in May 1977 state security operatives impounded 50,000 copies of the magazine featuring the second part of an interview with exiled former Biafran rebel leader, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu. The first part of the interview published in the April 16, 1977 edition caused state security operatives to search the magazine’s offices and interrogate its editors. The ban was lifted in February 1980 by the nascent civilian government but despite several efforts, the magazine never fully recovered (Ogbondah, 1994: 85-6).

For some, the Obasanjo regime’s effort to control the press was best exemplified by the controversial *Nigerian Press Council Decree 31 of 1978* which contrary to the self-regulatory traditions of press councils, at least in liberal democratic societies, literally made the state the ombudsman with government appointees far outnumbering representatives of professional media bodies on the council. Concerned by the implications of the legislation on unfettered media practice, the media bodies withheld cooperation with the council thus rendering the ineffective (Abayomi, 2003: 111, Ekpu, 1999: 60, Edeani, 1985: 57-8).

A subtle tactic used by the Obasanjo regime to influence if not control the editorial agenda of all national media was the monthly press briefing for editors at Dodan Barracks—the then seat of power. While the all expenses paid junket offered the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime the opportunity to attempt to forge a harmonious relationship with the national media, its primary purpose however, was to set the editorial agenda in furtherance of the regime’s policies. The briefings were sometimes very specific about not just the issues that deserve media prominence but also subjects that should either be played down or completely ignored (Ogbondah, 1994: 65-6). And like the military regimes before it, any perceived infractions were often addressed by the

interrogation, detention, and in the case of government owned press, the demotion, redeployment or dismissal of the journalists involved (Ogbondah, 1994: 85-7, Abayomi, 2003: 112). Other major communication policies of the Mohammed/Obasanjo regime include the May 1976 establishment of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) (did not take off until March 1978) and the enactment of the *Nigerian Enterprises Protection Decree of 1977*; a protectionist legislation that barred foreigners from owning media companies in Nigeria with the exception of no more than 40 per cent stake in book printing, periodicals and book publishing and pulp and paper milling (Edeani, 1985: 45).

The creation of seven new states in 1976 bringing the total to 19 further eroded the fractious regional government-broadcasting framework. With as many as 10 of the new states now operating their own broadcasting outlets, the Mohammed/Obasanjo military administration decided to radically restructure the sector. Central to the restructuring was the dissolution of the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) and the creation of two separate corporations each for television and radio. *Decree No. 24 of 1977* established the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and vested it with the sole authority to broadcast television signals in the country. The decree not only meant a forced federal takeover of all existing television stations in Nigeria, but also took away the prerogative of state governments to establish new ones. By 1978, the NTA had become a monopoly network with a station in virtually every state of the country and a capacity for coast-to-coast transmission (Igoyor, 1996: 169-70, Bourgault, 1995: 132-3, Elegalem, 1985: 69-71). The second key legislation in the restructuring exercise was *Decree No. 8 of April 1978*, which created the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). At the core of the new corporation were structures of the old NBC along with some former regional and state radio broadcasting organizations, which the federal military government forcibly took over. For instance, while the new corporation retained ownership of NBC stations in Lagos, Ibadan and Enugu along with the former Broadcasting Company of Northern Nigeria (BCNN) in Kaduna, it also transferred 20 former NBC stations to the states, albeit on reduced frequencies. Reminiscent of the old regional structure of the NBC, the decree sought to decentralize radio broadcasting by dividing FRCN operations into four 'autonomous' zones—Lagos, Ibadan, Enugu and Kaduna—reflecting the major linguistic and cultural blocks of Nigeria's then 19-state structure. While the FRCN head office in Lagos transmits in English and caters for the entire country, each zonal office catered primarily for the major linguistic groups under it.

The zonal system allowed for some degree of programming independence relative to the cultural needs of their local audiences so long as such programming were in line with the broader national development goals and aspirations. The Corporation's interest in grassroots broadcasting underscored government's quest to reach Nigeria's vast rural and functionally illiterate majority in their local languages. In pursuit of the grassroots outreach, each zonal service would over time set up a number of FM stations in their areas of operations. And with transmitters in virtually all states of the country, FRCN developed the capacity to reach 90 per cent of the population either in English or any of the major local languages (Offor, 2002: 152-7, Igyor, 1996: 166-7).

Although the Decree in principle made the FRCN the overseer of the radio broadcasting, the real regulatory powers rested with the Minister of Information who had responsibility for both the FRCN and the NTA and the Minister of Communications responsible for issuing all broadcast licenses. Just like the post-independence NBC, the changes were at best cosmetic, as the FRCN, to all intents and purposes, remained primarily a 'government broadcaster' committed to promoting "national objectives and aspirations"; as determined by the military government (Offor, 2002: 153-5). Both corporations, (the NTA and the FRCN), were each run by a Director-General and Board appointed by the President on the advice of the Minister of Information. That the appointees were often either apologists for or sympathetic to the regime in power severely compromised the editorial independence of both organizations and their credibility as impartial news sources (Bourgault, 1995: 133). It was this model of government broadcasting so susceptible to abuse that the military bequeathed to the incoming civilian administration on October 1, 1979 after 13 uninterrupted years in power.

The return of party politics led to the resurgence of media partisanship so reminiscent of Nigeria's very troubled first republic. The conditions were particularly germane for such partisanship as the three leading political parties of the second republic (1979-1983) —the National Party of Nigeria (North, Hausa-Fulani), the Unity Party of Nigeria (West, Yoruba) and the Nigerian Peoples Party (East, Ibo) —were largely formed along tribal lines with frontline nationalists and two key players in the first republic, Chief Obafemi Awolowo and Dr. Nnamdi Azikiwe (Zik) leading the second and third parties respectively. The other two parties, the Great Nigerian Peoples Party (GNPP) and the Peoples Redemption Party (PRP), also had their main support base in

specific geo-ethnic areas of the North. Not surprisingly, the only surviving party press of the first republic, Chief Awolowo's *The Tribune* (the last of Dr. Azikiwe's papers *The West African Pilot* having shutdown in 1978) soon returned to its brazen partisan ways as the mouthpiece of the Unity Party of Nigeria – the new platform for the followers of the defunct Action Group. Newspapers such as the *Concord*, *Satellite*, the *Weekly Trumpet* and many more were also established by wealthy politicians to further their interests. Parties in power at the federal and state levels soon deployed state media under their control to partisan ends in what increasingly became a media bedlam, a cacophony of competing propagandist organs in what Graham Mytton at best called “fractured pluralism” (cited in Bourgault, 1995: 138). While the second republic press undoubtedly ranks among the freest in Nigeria's history, it was a freedom bereft of any professional responsibility and civility.

Despite being as complicit as the opposition in the pervasive media abuse of the second republic, the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) did not hesitate to unleash state security agencies against critical journalists and media organizations (Abayomi, 2003: 113). For instance, in 1983, Dele Giwa, then the editor of the *Sunday Concord* was detained and charged under the *Official Secrets Act* for publishing government records that the police found embarrassing. In another instance, his *Concord* colleague and leading editorialist Ray Ekpu was slammed with several charges including murder for satirizing in an article the growing cases of arson in government buildings to destroy evidence of fraud. Coincidentally, a day after his column appeared, the tallest building in Lagos, the head office of the Nigeria Telecommunications Authority (NITEL) went up in flames killing several people. The courts cleared him of the charges after two weeks in detention (Hachten, 1993: 43-4). The NPN-led federal government also adopted such punitive administrative measures like denying opposition newspapers import licenses for newsprint (Agbaje, 1992: 192).

The fierce media partisanship of the second republic was even worse in broadcasting because of its extensive reach. Following the creation of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) in 1978, each of the 19 states some of which were now controlled by opposition parties inherited a radio station. But television broadcasting remained the exclusive preserve of the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) courtesy of Decree 24 of 1977. NTAs rabid support for the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led the Governors of the States where the opposition parties were in power to demand their

own television stations in line with Section 36, Sub-section 2 of the 1979 Constitution which states that “every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate a medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions provided that no person, other than the government of the Federation or of a state or any other person or body authorized by the President, shall own, establish or operate a television or wireless broadcasting station for any purposes whatsoever”. The newly established State government-owned television corporations were assigned the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) spectrum while the federally-owned NTA stations continued to broadcast on Very High Frequency (VHF) band (Igyor, 1996: 166, Bourgaut, 1995: 133). What ensued was a highly toxic broadcasting environment in which governing parties at the federal and state levels deployed the electronic media under their control for maximum political gains. In that media bedlam, nothing was off limit as savage partisan and often, personal attacks replaced substantive policy debates with time-honored news traditions sacrificed on the altar of crass political expediency. For instance, NTAs nationally televised news feature *Verdict 83*, became infamous for relentless attacks on the opposition parties and critics of the government while celebrating the phantom achievements of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN) despite evidence to the contrary (Abayomi, 2003: 113). In another instance, following the violent crises that engulfed Ondo State as a result of the disputed 1983 governorship election, the state government-owned broadcasting corporation not only actively helped instigate the riot through incendiary broadcasts but also aided the rioters by identifying the routes the fleeing opposition party chieftains and their supporters were taking and asking residents of the areas to block off the roads (Abati, 2004). Arguably, one of the more dramatic incidents during Nigeria’s second republic (1979-1983) partisan broadcasting circus was the 1983 on-air resignation of Chuma Edozie, a television newscaster in the Eastern city of Enugu who claimed in the middle of a news bulleting that he was sick and tired of spreading false information. While some hailed him as a man of tremendous courage and conscience (Martin, 1998: 70-1), it is also possible he was part of a broader plot to embarrass the station’s political allies given that he could easily have resigned his job weeks or months earlier or even before getting on air that evening.

Nigeria’s second republic (1979-1983) was in many respects doomed to fail. The lack of democratic culture following 13 years of military rule was obvious just as political violence and other forms of lawlessness were rampant. Cronyism, patronage and

corruption became the norm of what Richard Joseph (1987) aptly described as “prebendal politics”. These along with the massively rigged general elections of 1983 and the widespread violence it generated brought the military back to power on December 31, 1983 after a little over four years (precisely fifty-one months) of ‘civil’ rule (see Falola, 1999: 173-4).³

The new military government led by the austere General Muhammad Buhari cast itself as a ‘corrective’ regime determined to right the many wrongs of the civilians. It cited political corruption and the abuse of the media, particularly broadcasting among the major reasons for its intervention. It specifically promised to restructure broadcasting along the 1977-78 lines, a framework which the civilian governments at both the federal and state levels ignored by allowing the proliferation of stations many of whose activities were antithetical to democratic values. The restructuring exercise resulted in among other things, the closure of several stations established by the FRCN under the civilian regime. With the state owned broadcasting outlets once again under the control of military Governors, their potential as alternative, even if intensely partisan news sources (as was the case during the civilian administration) fizzled. As reprehensible as the abuse of broadcasting was under Nigeria’s second republic, the restructuring embarked upon by the General Buhari administration no more than ensured a return to the totalitarian system in which government programs were uniformly disseminated devoid of critical analysis or alternative viewpoints.

A major defining feature of the General Buhari regime was its antipathy for the press. Like previous military regimes, it suspended key sections of the (1979) constitution, assumed absolute legislative powers and ousted the jurisdiction of the courts to question the validity of its laws courtesy of *Decree No. 1, Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree of 1984*. It also promulgated *Decree No. 2, State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree of 1984*—another staple of all previous military regimes—allowing it to detain indefinitely any person considered a threat to state security (Ogbondah, 1994: 99-101, 125-7). While both legislations have grave implications for press freedom particularly *Decree No. 2* under which a number of

³ Some of the opposition newspapers notably the *Concord* and the *Punch* not only canvassed for a military takeover of power but also actively participated in planning the putsch (Agbaje, 1992: 185-6).

journalists and critical voices were incarcerated, the regime's most lethal weapon against the press was *Decree No. 4, Public Officers (Protection Against False Accusation) Decree of 1984* which as its name indicates sought to protect government officials from malicious accusations. Although hardly novel—being primarily a rehash of *Decree 11 of 1976* with a similar title, it however differed from the previous law in two markedly draconian ways—the adjudication this time by a Special Military Tribunal as opposed to a law court, and the implicit criminalization of factual reporting so long it ridiculed a public officer. This made *Decree 4* arguably the harshest and most loathed press legislation in Nigeria's post-independent history. Enacted on March 29, 1984, roughly three months after the regime came to power, the Decree made it an indictable act for a newspaper or wireless telegraphy station to publish or transmit in any form “any message, rumor, report or statement, being a message, rumor, statement or report which is false in any material particular or which brings or is calculated to bring the Federal Military Government or the Government of a State or public officer to ridicule or disrepute...”. Cases under the Decree were to be adjudicated by a military tribunal composed of a High Court judge and three members of the armed forces no lower in rank than an army major. The tribunal's decision was final and not appealable in any court of law. The maximum penalty under the decree was two years imprisonment for a journalist or publisher with no option of a fine or a minimum fine of 10, 000 Naira (about \$13, 000 at the time) in the case of a business organization. The tribunal could also order the forfeiture of all or some of the newspaper's printing equipment to the federal government. In addition, the law also empowered the Head of the military government to ban the circulation of the offending newspaper or revoke the license of a guilty wireless telegraphy station as well as order the forfeiture of any such station to the federal government in the national interest (Ogbondah, 1994: 101-4). *Decree 4* was so loosely worded (deliberately I assume) and “clogged with ambiguities” that it raised a couple of fundamental but very troubling questions: was it unlawful for a journalist or media organization to publish a true report or statement or was the crime in the potential of the published report (regardless of its veracity) to embarrass or ridicule a public official? (Ogbondah, 1994: 103). Determined to show the law was no bluff, the Gen. Buhari regime arrested and subsequently charged two senior reporters of the privately-owned *Guardian* newspaper, Tunde Thompson and Nduka Irabor, along with the newspaper for publishing false statements on account of three speculative but seemingly innocuous stories about impending diplomatic postings and plans to restructure Nigeria's foreign

missions. The offending stories appeared in *The Guardian* issues of March 31, April 1 and April 8, 1984 respectively with the following headlines—"11 Foreign Missions to be Closed", "Eight Military Chiefs Tipped as Ambassadors" and "Haruna Replaces Hannaniya as U.K Envoy". The last story, which appeared to have riled the regime most, speculated that Nigeria's High Commissioner in London Major-General Anthony Hannaniya was to be replaced by Major-General Ibrahim Haruna (Ogbondah, 1995: 127-8, Abayomi, 2003: 114). The charges—three for Tunde Thompson and two for Nduka Irabor—claimed that the reports were "false in every material particular". On July 5, 1984, the military tribunal headed by Justice Joshua Olalere Ayinde along with three military officers; Major Sanni Ahmed Fari (Army), Squadron Leader Clifford Maigani (Air Force) and Lieutenant Commander Joseph Ekeng-Ewa (Navy) acquitted the reporters of the first two charges but found them guilty of the third charge relating to the replacement of the High Commissioner in London. Each reporter was sentenced to one year prison term with no option of fine as stipulated by the decree. The *Guardian* newspaper, on its part was fined 50,000 Naira (about \$67,000 at the time), way higher than the 10, 000 Naira minimum recommended by the decree and ordered to post a 100, 000 Naira bond before leaving the tribunal premises. The penalties, the tribunal chairman noted were to serve as a "deterrent to others" (Ogbondah, 1994: 128, Abayomi, 2003: 114). The verdict was delivered after both reporters had spent roughly three months in detention and coincidentally, on the first anniversary of the newspaper as a daily (Ogbondah, 1994: 128-9).

Beside the anti-press decrees, another key administrative measure the General Buhari regime used effectively against the press was import license restriction which severely limited the amount of newsprint, printing equipment and materials a newspaper company could import. While officially rationalized as an economic policy in the light of the foreign exchange squeeze that Nigeria was grappling with at the time, it allowed the regime to arbitrarily decide which media companies to favour (Ogbondah, 1994: 107). Not surprisingly, the more critical newspapers were, either denied licenses outright or only allowed to import quantities that were grossly inadequate to their needs. And when two of such newspapers, *Concord* and *Punch*, imported newsprint through some other means, it was seized by the junta and handed to two federal government newspapers, *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian* (Abayomi, 2003: 114).

In truth, General Buhari's antipathy for the press was very personal. For years, the rumor mill was rife that as Federal Minister of Petroleum between 1975-1978, he was complicit in the alleged disappearance of N2.8 billion (Naira) (about \$3.5 billion at the time). In his very first press interview as Head of State, he was unequivocal that his government would muzzle the press and *Decree No. 4*—a clear testament to that vow—was both a preemptive move to stop any of the old rumors from resurfacing as well as preventing fresh allegations either against him or any public officer for that matter from being made. For the regime, the gag laws became even more expedient given the groundswell of grumbling by deposed politicians many of who were in detention and awaiting trial for corrupt enrichment but who were quick to point out that military officers like General Buhari were no saints (Ogbondah, 1994: 99, 122-3). There were thus no tears shed, at least within the press, when the Buhari regime was toppled on August 27, 1985 (after 18 months) in a palace coup led by then Army Chief, General Ibrahim Babangida which set Nigeria on a tortuous and seemingly interminable transition to civil rule program. And if you think that state-media relationship has thus far been adversarial, you will be stunned by what emerged during the so called transition years.

Chapter 3.

State and the Mass Media in the Tortuous Political Transition Years: 1985-1999

As Peter Golding and Philip Elliott rightly observed, early Nigerian journalism was “created by anti-colonial protest, baptized in the waters of nationalist propaganda, and matured in party politics. The separation of politics and journalism has remained incomplete and the dual allegiances of journalists to professional and political goals have created conflicts whose resolution in daily practice underpins much of contemporary Nigerian journalism” (Golding and Elliott, 1979: 31). A major consequence of this has been the manifestation of two tendencies: “partisan, often polemical advocacy” on the one hand and “adulatory journalism” on the other depending on what parochial interests—proprietary, ethnic, political, economic and cultural the press in question serves (Ibelema 2003: 171). This partisanship was particularly true with the press traditions prevalent in Nigeria until the early 1980s: “newspaper chains attached strongly to partisan political interests, drawing sustenance from government funds as a result of this attachment, and newspapers directly owned either by governments or political parties” (Agbaje, 1992: 198).

Paradoxically, decades of press partisanship that arguably reached a nadir during Nigeria’s Second Republic (1979-1983) seem to have inspired a new tradition of privately owned commercial print media established in the classic social responsibility watchdog tradition and not primarily beholden to some parochial ethnic or political interests. Among the pioneering titles in this regard are the *Guardian* (1983) and *Vanguard* (1984). There was also the trailblazing weekly newsmagazine, *Newswatch* founded in 1984 by topflight editors with extensive professional experience as well as the glossy but short-lived weekly, *Thisweek* which debuted in 1985. The demise of the second republic also forced newspapers like *The Tribune*, *The Punch* and the *Concord* to jettison their rabid political partisanship for a more balanced editorial approach. Many more publications in this tradition followed in the years to come with varying degrees of

success and longevity. Some were established by wealthy businessmen and others by professional journalists (see Ibelema, 2003:173-4). The success of publications like *The Guardian* without doubt helped entrench the model as the dominant press paradigm in Nigeria since the mid-1980s; a development that marginalized the once dominant government press and set it on the inevitable road to extinction. Unlike the obsequious broadcasting sector, the emergent privately-owned liberal print media in the immediate post-second republic environment continued to provide whatever openings there were for critical public discourse despite the repressive policies of the General Buhari regime.

The August 27, 1985 ouster of General Buhari in a palace coup led by then Army Chief General Ibrahim Babangida was generally welcomed by Nigerians including the press who evidently were enthused by the populist rhetoric of the new regime. For example, in his maiden broadcast to the nation, General Babangida repealed *Decree 4* and ordered the immediate and unconditional release of the journalists imprisoned under it. He also pledged to review all military decrees as part of a broader commitment to human rights and the rule of law. Unlike his predecessor (Gen. Buhari), he urged Nigerians and particularly the press to scrutinize his administration's policies and actions assuring that such criticisms "will be given necessary attention and, where necessary, changes made in accordance with what is expected of us". While he assured that, "the responsibility of the media to disseminate information shall be exercised without undue hindrance" he however warned that "those responsible are expected to be forthright and to have the nation's interest as the primary consideration" (Ogbondah, 1994: 141). The administration's promise to initiate a transition to civil rule program (an idea that was almost treasonable under the Buhari regime) was also warmly welcomed.

The positive media coverage that these early pledges generated helped earn the regime some goodwill with Nigerians. However, the relationship with the press soon after soured as it became increasingly apparent that the regime was not only intolerant of criticism but worse still, lacked transparency in its transition program and overall conduct of state affairs. For instance, contrary to his promise to review all decrees, General Babangida, not only retained the highly obnoxious *State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree 2 of 1984* but used it even more frequently against critics of his administration including journalists (Ogbondah, 1994: 147, 153-8). But the major turning point in the administration's relationship with the press was the October 19, 1986 assassination of Dele Giwa, the founding Editor-in-Chief of the trail-blazing weekly newsmagazine

Newswatch popular for its hardnosed investigative brand of journalism. Giwa was killed by a parcel bomb in his study while having breakfast with the magazine's London Correspondent Kayode Soyinka. In the two weeks leading up to his death, he had been questioned by top State Security and Military Intelligence officials who accused him of, among other things, importing arms and trying to stir civil unrest in the country; all of which he vehemently denied. Deeply troubled by the allegations and fearing for his life, he asked his lawyer to immediately take up the allegations with the authorities. The parcel bomb was delivered to his Ikeja-Lagos residence by unidentified persons who allegedly told his unsuspecting and illiterate houseboy the package was a 'Christmas gift' from the President. The parcel exploded as he opened it killing him almost instantly and slightly wounding the Correspondent. To date, Giwa's murder remains unresolved despite the great outrage it generated. Frustrated by perceived government apathy to thoroughly investigate the murder and bring the culprits to book, his lawyer Gani Fawenhimi made sustained but futile effort through the courts to be granted private prosecutorial powers over the matter. In truth, the junta's purported effort to resolve Giwa's murder sometimes bordered on the ludicrous. First, a government investigative panel came up with nothing. Then the two security chiefs were belatedly charged for murder only for the case to be dismissed on February 23, 1988 after Crown prosecutors bizarrely agreed with the defense team that the Security Chiefs were indeed innocent (Ogbondah, 1994: 152-3). Begs the question why they were charged in the first place if Crown was convinced of their innocence.

On April 6, 1987, barely six months after Giwa's assassination, (his magazine) *Newswatch* was proscribed for six months for publishing the yet to be released report of the Dr. J.S. Cookey commission set up to moderate a national debate on Nigeria's political future on the basis of which a transition to civil rule program would be articulated. The ban which took effect courtesy of *Proscription and Prohibition from Circulation (Newswatch) Decree, 1987* allowed for both the prohibition of the magazine from circulating in Nigeria and the sealing up of its premises by the Inspector-General of Police or any authorized official of the regime. It also specifically ousted the jurisdiction of the courts from entertaining any constitutional challenge to the proscription. The other three founding Editors of the magazine, Ray Ekpu, Dan Agbese and Yakubu Mohammed, were briefly but repeatedly detained in the days following the proscription and threatened with prosecution under the *Official Secrets Act of 1964* which carries a

maximum jail time of 14 years. Although the editors were spared prosecution, the regime justified its extreme recourse to proscription by claiming it had tried to stop the publication of the report by appealing both directly to the magazine's management and through media professional bodies; a claim flatly denied by the editors. It further claimed that the magazine's advance publication of the Commission's report could prejudice a balanced consideration of its recommendations and cause disaffection among Nigeria's diverse ethnic groups. That however was a red herring as the leaked report contained nothing even remotely threatening to state security and national unity. If anything, key aspects of the report such as the philosophy and political system of the proposed Third Republic, formation of political parties, creation of new states, role of traditional rulers, tenure of elected officials among others, were passionately debated at the committee's public forums across the country (Ogbondah, 1994: 145-7, 151). Rather than a concern for national unity, the junta's clampdown on the magazine was in fact a desperate act at damage control and self-preservation as it had, prior to the leak, quietly rejected some of the committee's key recommendations most notably the 1990 date for military disengagement from power. The regime instead decided on a 1992 handover date which it later moved to 1993 (Falola, 1999). The constant tinkering if not manipulation of the transition program led to widespread belief the regime harbored a "hidden agenda" geared towards self-perpetuation (see Bourgault 1998: 80-2, Daimond et al, 1997, Falola, 1999).

Growing skepticism over the transition program coupled with entrenched corruption at the highest levels of government led to growing critical scrutiny of the regime by sections of the emergent privately-owned print media. In response, it adopted such repressive measures like the proscription and arbitrary closure of 'offending' media organizations and the rampant harassment and detention of their journalists. The Babangida regime's clampdown on the media intensified in the wake of the April 22, 1990 coup in which a small group of junior army officers from mostly the Northern and Southern minority ethnic groups came close to toppling the government. It promptly responded by shutting down a number of newspapers (albeit briefly) and detaining numerous journalists from both the print and broadcast media for merely reporting the putsch which was eventually crushed by loyalist troops after a tense standoff that lasted

nearly half a day⁴ (Ogbondah, 1994: 153-9). Notwithstanding, the critical press remained undeterred in scrutinizing the regime's handling of state affairs. A good example was the April 1992 closure of *African Concord* weekly newsmagazine over a critical cover story on the regime's duplicitous mismanagement of the transition program and the economy titled "Has Babangida Given Up"? Aside from shutting down the magazine's premises, security operatives also sealed another compound housing other titles in the *Concord* stable along with other non-media businesses in what apparently was an effort to inflict maximum economic punishment on the parent company. The junta insisted on a public apology by the editor to the President before the premises would be reopened. Pressed by his publisher Chief M.K.O. Abiola to apologize, the editor Bayo Onanuga refused and instead resigned along with a number of the magazine's senior editorial staff (Abayomi, 2003: 115, Ajibade, 2003: 10-2). They emerged months later with a new publication, *The News* which along with *Tell* (founded in 1991 by another group of journalists formerly with *Newswatch*) embodied a more adversarial journalistic temperament in comparison with the more editorially circumspect privately-owned liberal print media. The pivotal roles of the various press traditions in the sustained campaign against military despotism in Nigeria will be more fully discussed in Chapter 4.

Not surprisingly, the much manipulated transition to civil rule program reached a dead end when General Babangida inexplicably annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential elections widely acclaimed as the freest in Nigeria's history. This plunged the nation into a huge political crises resulting in near total breakdown of law and order in several parts, particularly the predominantly Yoruba speaking South West—home region of the presumed winner of the election, Chief M.K.O. Abiola. Scathing editorials critical of the annulment appeared in virtually all major private print media with their lead stories also often privileging the views of pro-democracy activists over those of junta officials and its apologists. For example, in its editorial on June 23, 1993, the *Sunday Concord* published by Chief Abiola described the annulment as "a crude and unwarranted subversion of the

⁴ The mutinous soldiers had seized the head office of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) in Lagos from where they broadcast to the entire nation that there has been a change of government. The broadcast went on for close to half a day before they were dislodged from the station after several hours of fighting. Every successful coup in Nigeria starts with seizing the FRCN station which since the 1980s is heavily guarded by armoured tanks. It helps explain why radio broadcasting is such a sensitive media in Nigeria and the entire African continent where military coups were rampant (see Aginam, 2005).

Nigerian will”, and the attempt to justify it the “most repulsive insult on the intelligence of the average Nigerian” (cited in Ogbondah, 1994: 149).

Barraged by media attacks over the annulled election, the regime hit back with three decrees all promulgated retroactively within a week of August 1993. First was the *Offensive Publications (Proscription) Decree 35 of 1993*, which empowered the head of the military government to proscribe or seize, any publication considered a threat to state security or public order. Although formally enacted in August, the decree was backdated to January 1, 1993 to provide ‘legal’ cover for the seizure of about 100,000 copies of *Tell* magazine in July (Ogbondah, 1994: 147, 158). The second edict, *Newspapers Decree 43 of 1993*, replaced the existing Newspapers Act with more stringent registration guidelines for all newspapers. Although formally announced on August 16, the decree was made retroactive to June 22, 1993—the tense first weeks following the annulled election. It required among other things the pre-publication licensing of all existing and future newspapers in the country by a board appointed by the head of the military government; the yearly renewal of such licenses based on the board of registration’s satisfaction with the performance of the newspaper in the previous year; the completion of the renewal within six weeks of the expiration of an existing registration failing which the publication would be deemed illegal; the payment of an annual registration fee of 250, 000 Naira and a non refundable deposit of 100, 000 Naira; and the daily delivery of a copy of each newspaper duly signed by its editor to the Minister of Information. Other provisions include jail time of 7 years, a fine of 250, 000 Naira or both for publishing an unregistered newspaper and same fine and a jail time of 10 years for any registered newspaper which published a false report.

The third of the press related decrees enacted on the heels of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election was the *Newspapers etc. (Proscription and Prohibition from Circulation Decree 48 of 1993)* which proscribed more than seventeen newspapers and magazines from several media organizations including Concord Press, Punch Ltd., Sketch Press and the Bendel Newspapers Corporation. Although *Decree 48* was announced on August 16, 1993, like the Newspaper registration law, it was also made retroactive to July 22 when the media organizations were first shutdown by state security agents (Ogbondah, 1994: 147-150, 158).

Despite its many run-ins with the critical press and segments of civil society, the Babangida administration was the first to take incremental steps towards liberalizing the

Nigerian economy even if the communications sector was largely in the margins of that initial effort. Within months of seizing power in August 1985, the regime acquiesced to the insistent demands of both the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to restructure the Nigerian economy from a state-controlled to a market-driven one. Proponents of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP), as the policy came to be known, claimed it would jump-start Nigeria's faltering economy and create an enabling socioeconomic environment necessary for enduring democratization. This reflects a key tenet of neoliberal democratization that sees market economics and political liberalization as mutually reinforcing. Dramatic decline in petroleum earnings (Nigeria's primary source of revenue) since the early 1980s resulted in severe economic downturn, a situation Nigerian governments of the time first tried to address through short-term external loans and other fiscal austerity measures. However, worsening oil prices and default in the repayment of the short-term loans exacerbated the economic crises creating further balance-of-payment shortfalls. Nigeria's external creditors principally linked the crises to government subsidies and overall involvement in the economy; a policy they insisted must change before any long term loans could be approved for the country. SAP as a laissez-faire policy was thus predicated on the following key conditions: currency devaluation (based on market mechanism and not government determined exchange rates), the liberalization of trade, privatization of state-controlled corporations and perhaps the most politically risky of all—removal of government subsidies, in particular, the 80% subsidy on domestic petroleum prices. As we will see shortly, SAP proved an unmitigated disaster by fostering a corrupt plutocratic order at the expense of the middle and lower classes. In many respects, the massive and debilitating poverty it created helped undermine public confidence in the parallel political transition program (Biersteker and Lewis, 1997, see also Umoren, 2001, Bourgault, 1998: 83-4).

Pursuant to its reform efforts, the General Babangida administration soon after assuming office in August 1985 split the Department of Posts and Telecommunications (P&T) into two crown corporations, Nigerian Postal Service (NIPOST) and Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL). Since independence in 1960, the Nigerian telecommunications sector consisted of two separate corporations, the Department of Post and Telecommunications responsible for domestic operations and the Nigerian External Telecommunication (NET) (a limited liability company), charged with external

services. The rather curious arrangement where domestic and external services were under different corporations created big challenges both in terms of infrastructural development and service delivery. The 1985 split put both the internal and external telecommunications services under one company, Nigerian Telecommunications Limited (NITEL) which in 1987 became a government controlled publicly quoted company (National Telecommunications Policy, 2000: 11-2). A year later, the regime established, courtesy of *Decree No. 25 of 1988*, a Technical Committee on Privatization and Commercialization (TCPC) of government corporations. However, under the framework, major state media corporations like the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) were excluded from privatization. They were instead earmarked for partial commercialization which required them to, at the very least, cover their operating costs. This not only led to their more aggressive pursuit of advertising and marketing revenues, but even worse, the charging of fees for news and promotional coverage of non-government personalities and institutions (Bourgault, 1998: 93, Bourgault, 1995: 101, 138-9). While the practice of paid news was most prevalent in the federal government owned broadcast media, in particular the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the print and broadcast media of the various state governments also embraced the practice. For the newspapers, the amount charged usually depended on the pages in which the stories appeared with the front and back pages and stories accompanied by pictures attracting the highest rates (Ogbondah, 2003: 101).

By the late 1980s though, it was hardly clear even to the most perceptive observers which way the General Babangida administration's communication policy was leaning. While on the one hand it embraced liberalization by setting up the committee on privatization in 1988, on the other, it adopted the highly statist *1990 National Mass Communications Policy* which reinforced government's stranglehold on the communications sector in the interest of national goals, unity and development. For example, the policy document which was adopted on April 10, 1990 by the highest legislative organ, the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) endorsed a monopoly free print media sector in which state and private ownership of newspapers, magazines and other print endeavors shall coexist but in which "the national interest of Nigeria shall in all circumstances and at all times, guide the definition of news". It even proposed the establishment of an agency to ensure compliance with what it called "the new concept of news" anchored on national interest (National Mass Communication Policy, 1990: 7-8).

With respect to broadcasting, particularly radio, the document underscored its pre-eminent role in nation-building on the basis of which it endorsed the continued state monopoly of the broadcast sector; claiming simply that Nigeria was not sufficiently mature for private broadcasting, even as it cautioned that continuing state monopoly should not compromise the accurate and balanced presentation of information from all parts of the country and the guaranteed editorial independence of broadcasting professionals (National Mass Communication Policy, 1990: 9-11). The document also underscored the need to harness such traditional forms of communication like folk performances, storytelling, town-crying, among others that are prevalent in the country's vast rural communities and integrating them into modern mass media. To that end, it proposed the transformation of village halls and communal arenas into modern broadcasting listening and viewing centers; the establishment of Rural Information Officer Corps to help co-ordinate the centers; the greater coverage of rural areas and issues by state broadcasters, and the establishment of community media in their immediate rural localities (National Mass Communication Policy, 1990: 14-16). The policy also covered culture and cultural institutions like Museums and Archives, visual and performing arts as well as films and in each case, the overriding objective was their deployment in the propagation of national values in the service of nation building (National Mass Communication Policy, 1990: 17-23).

In the external communication front, it called for the establishment of Cultural Attaches in all Nigerian embassies and the re-invigoration of the Voice of Nigeria (VON) as an effective voice of cultural diplomacy in the honored tradition of such organizations like the Voice of America (VOA), the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) World Service and Germany's Duestche Velle. Not only should the Voice of Nigeria (VON) "aggressively" and "forcefully" transmit Nigeria's position on all international issues to the world, it also "shall respond promptly and effectively to any or all forms of negative manipulations of information by foreign media on Nigeria's domestic foreign (*sic*) policies and interests" (National Communication Policy, 1990: 25-8). One of the document's arguably most contentious propositions was an amendment of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) Act of 1976 to require all foreign news agencies to sell their services in Nigeria through the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN). It claimed this would enhance the finances of NAN and ensure that no agency news that 'distorts' the national image of Nigeria is distributed in the country (National Mass Communication Policy, 1990: 38-9).

In pursuant of its core objectives, the 1990 national mass communication policy recommended the establishment of a supra agency, the National Communication Commission (NCC), to oversee the entire communications sector with responsibilities ranging from research, planning and resource development to policy formulation and enforcement. A second agency, the Nigerian Media Council (NMC), to be composed mostly of prominent journalists was to have a more limited mandate of registering and accrediting journalists and enforcing professional code of ethics (National Mass Communication Policy, 1990: 39-42). Interestingly, most of the recommendations of the policy document were either completely abandoned within two years of their adoption by the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) or came to fruition in ways totally different from the original form in which they were articulated. For instance, due to growing local and international agitation for democratization, the latter, which, was inextricably tied to deregulation, the military government in 1992 suddenly abandoned its opposition to private broadcasting by establishing the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) with responsibility to liberalize the airwaves. Also in July 1993 the proposed mega-regulator, the National Communications Commission (NCC), metamorphosed as the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) charged solely with telecommunications regulation. Similarly, the proposed Nigerian Media Council (NMC) was replaced by the Nigerian Press Council (NPC).⁵

The apparent contradiction in the Babangida regime's communication policies of the late 1980s reflected the shenanigan of African despots of the period as they weighed their political options following the collapse of communism and the emergent global push towards democratization (Bourgault, 1995: 99-101). Many of them had hoped it would be short-lived so they could return to their dictatorial ways. But with the tidal wave of democratization showing no signs of abating, the Babangida administration suddenly abandoned the 1990 *National Mass Communication Policy* in favor of a liberalized communications sector albeit a limited and tightly controlled one. This dramatic shift in

⁵ The National Mass Communication Policy has its roots in a February 1987 seminar organized by the Federal Ministry of Information and Culture that featured about 250 handpicked stakeholders composed mostly of academics, media professionals and bureaucrats. The original report of the seminar subsequently went through a number of 'expert committee' reviews before being adopted with amendments by the National Council on Information and Culture (March 1987), the National Council of Ministers (January 1988), the National Council of States (March 1990) and finally, the Armed Forces Ruling Council (AFRC) (March 17, 1990).

policy came by way of two key legislations. First was *Decree No. 38 of (August) 1992*, which established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) tasked with the regulation of broadcasting. The legislation marked the opening up of Nigeria's broadcasting sector to private operators. But how truly far-reaching or substantive is this policy shift? Has it dramatically changed Nigeria's long entrenched statist broadcasting culture? Does the mere licensing of a few 'carefully chosen' and often well connected private broadcasters guarantee the plurality of viewpoints including those of critical elements in society? How restrictive are the legislative and institutional frameworks under which the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) operates and what degree of independence, if any, has the commission enjoyed under successive governments—military and civilian? Does the licensing of these limited range Frequency Modulation (FM) operators signal the end of government monopoly of nationwide (coast to coast) broadcasting? (Aginam, 2005: 129-130, Onwumechili, 2007: 126-130). While some of these questions will be broached in Chapter 3, a more in-depth discussion of broadcasting liberalization will be undertaken in Chapter 5.

The second major legislation, *Decree 75 of 1992*, established the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) with the task of "facilitating the entry of private entrepreneurs into the telecommunications market; and promoting fair competition and efficient market conduct among all players in the industry". The Commission was inaugurated in July 1993 almost one year after the decree was promulgated (National Telecommunications Policy, 2000: 13). Like the broadcasting decree, the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) legislation also ended state monopoly of telecommunications in Nigeria. Although both the broadcasting and telecommunication decrees were promulgated in 1992, it took a few years for both agencies to become fully operational. However, what has become obvious in the years since their establishment is that successive governments (military and civilian) have clearly shown more commitment to liberalizing, even fully deregulating the telecoms sector in contrast with broadcasting where the interest is at best tepid.

Despite the Babangida administration's pioneering effort at liberalization; it overall failed in its twin economic and political reform programs. For one, the highly controversial and very unpopular Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) not only failed to deliver the economic benefits it promised but actually brought with it so much hardship and penury which Louise Bourgault (1995: 83) aptly described as the "proletarianization

of the middle classes". Conversely, the program fostered a plutocratic and patronage-riddled order which the political and economic elite exploited for their personal gain. The intense and widespread anger over the policy helped undermine public interest in the political transition program and also resulted in increased government repression of all types of dissent. For instance, large and sometimes violent demonstrations by civil society groups notably organized labor and university students were rampant. Resentment to the administration's policies also sometimes manifested by way of religious riots but with obvious economic undertones. The apparent failure of the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) along with the widespread opposition to it caused a rethink of the policy so much that by 1992, the Babangida regime had all but formally abandoned it. With SAP in limbo, all that remained of the regime's reform efforts was the transition to civil rule program whose terminal date had been deferred thrice sparking concerns of a "hidden agenda" aimed at self-succession. Not all together surprising, the political transition came to a head when General Babangida inexplicably cancelled the result of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections won by Chief M.K.O. Abiola plunging the country into a massive political crisis that lingered for years.

The failed reform programs of the Babangida administration have raised questions about the compatibility of economic reform and democratic transition. Are they mutually reinforcing as neoliberal theorists and donor agencies claim or mutually exclusive as critics suggest? Opinions slightly vary on the Nigerian experience. While Thomas Biersteker and Peter M. Lewis (1997: 327-8) see no concrete evidence of one inevitably undermining the other; laying the blame instead on the character of the military regime and how both programs were implemented, Rose Umoren (2001) finds a direct link between the appalling socioeconomic conditions, culture of secrecy, patronage, and moral decay fostered by SAP and General Babangida's failed 8 -year transition to civil rule program.

Under intense local and international pressure over the annulled presidential election, General Babangida suddenly vacated power on August 23, 1993 replacing his administration with a handpicked and hurriedly assembled Interim National Government (ING) led by businessman Chief Ernest Shonekan. The interim government itself was barely three months in power when it was toppled by the Defence Minister General Sani Abacha, a close Babangida associate and the only holdover from the previous regime (Biersteker and Lewis, 1997). The short-lived Interim National Government (ING) faced

serious credibility and legitimacy challenges. Not only was it denounced by the pro-democracy community which insisted on the validation of the annulled election as the solution to the political crises, it also faced a number of legal challenges with at least one court of law declaring it unconstitutional (Ogbondah, 2003: 1-4). Yet it was economic policy decisions directly linked to market reforms that more than anything facilitated its hasty demise. Shortly after assuming office, Head of the Interim Government Chief Shonekan re-opened negotiations with the IMF and Nigeria's other creditors which had stalled under the Babangida administration. A major sticky point in previous negotiations had been government subsidy of domestic petroleum products which the interim government acquiesced to resulting in an abrupt 700% increase in their prices. Still seething over the annulled election, the labor movement led a nationwide strike to protest the price hike. Three days into the crippling strike which was accompanied by violent clashes between protesters and security forces in several parts of the country, the Defence Minister, General Abacha ousted the interim government on November 17, 1993. He justified the putsch which returned Nigeria to full-blown military rule as necessary to "move the country forward" by drawing a line on the annulled presidential election (Ogbondah, 2003: 4, Biersteker and Lewis, 1997: 325-6). Many prominent politicians and pro-democracy activists including the presumed winner of the annulled election M.K.O. Abiola initially supported the coup with some even appointed to high profile Cabinet positions. Apparently, General Abacha had in secret discussions made them believe he would work to de-annul the election and transfer power to them at the earliest possible time (Falola, 1999: 195-6).

As it turned out, General Abacha's ascension to power opened a new and more praetorian phase in Nigeria's transition roulette. Like previous military regimes, he promulgated decrees to legitimize his government and immediately dissolved 'democratic' institutions that were already in place. Among those were the National Electoral Commission (NEC), the two government formed political parties, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) and the National Republican Convention (NRC),⁶ the National

⁶ While Gen. Babangida administration's unconventional decision to decree two political parties was widely criticized, especially by academics, it helped undermine the ethnic nature of Nigerian politics by facilitating "broad-based coalition of interests" (see Odunewu, 1999: 288). Indeed in the annulled 1993 election, the Social Democratic Party (SDP) candidate, Chief Abiola, a southern Yoruba won overwhelmingly in several Northern states against the National Republican Candidate, Alhaji Tofa; a Northern Hausa-Fulani.

Assembly (the Senate and the House of Representatives) and the various State assemblies, elected local councils and state governors. He also outlawed all forms of political activities or associations. *Decree No. 1 of 1993* established an all-military Provincial Ruling Council (PRC) which assumed supreme legislative authority. As the name indicates another complementary legislation, the *Constitution (Suspension and Modification) Decree No. 17 of 1993*, put in abeyance sections of the 1979 constitution and gave the military government “absolute powers to make laws for the peace, order and good government of Nigeria...with respect to any matter whatsoever...”. It also ousted the powers of the courts to question the validity of the decree or any other laws enacted by the regime. Similarly, the *Federal Military Government (Supremacy and Enforcement of Powers) Decree No. 12 of 1994*, reinforced the absolute legislative powers of the military government and the supremacy of its laws over the constitution, other extant legislations particularly those dealing with fundamental human rights. The decree which was drafted on August 24, 1994 but made retroactive to November 8, 1993 (the day after the coup) was a belated attempt to scuttle the growing number of constitutional challenges on the regime’s legitimacy and legislative powers (Ogbondah, 2003: 7-8, 16-7). General Abacha’s ascendancy to power also marked the end of the economic and political reform programs of the Babangida years. In place of market reform, he returned to interventionist (statist) policies. And instead of bringing the previous regime’s transition program to a conclusive end by either releasing the result of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential polls or conducting a new election as the head of the interim government had proposed, he initiated a fresh transition to civil rule program, which over time became evident was geared towards only one goal—self succession. For example, his government overlooked more credible political associations and registered only five parties formed by his cronies all of which endorsed him (General Abacha) as their consensus presidential candidate (Ogbondah, 2003: 63-9).

Unarguably, General Abacha’s ascent to power marked Nigeria’s descent to a level of repression unparalleled by any past military ruler. Such bestiality was most evident in his intensely predatory relationship with a section of the non-government press and other pro-democracy voices critical of his administration’s wanton rights violations and self-succession agenda. And because the critical press, prominent politicians and leading pro-democracy groups such as the National Democratic Coalition

(NADECO), the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO) and the Campaign for Democracy (CD) among others were insistent on either the actualization of the annulled June 12 presidential elections or the immediate return of the country to civil rule, he saw them as a threat to his ambitions (Ogbondah, 2003: 59-68). While many of the regime's fiercest critics, like the writer, social critic and Nobel laureate, Wole Soyinka⁷ were hounded into exile, others were locked up indefinitely having been deemed threats to state security. Worse still, some were brazenly shot and in some cases killed by members of a special state security taskforce who drove around in unmarked vehicles in search of 'enemies' of the administration. In June 1996, Kudirat Abiola, wife of the now incarcerated winner of the June 12, 1993 presidential elections, M.K.O. Abiola was shot and killed in broad daylight in Ikeja, a suburb of Lagos. Following her husband's incarceration, she transformed from a little known housewife to one of the most prominent critics of the administration and a heroine of the pro-democracy community. Also in 1996, Abraham Adesanya, a lawyer and octogenarian leader of the National Democratic Coalition (NADECO) and Alex Ibru, publisher of the influential newspaper *The Guardian* both miraculously survived brazen assassination attempts. Ibru briefly served the junta as Internal Affairs Minister; an appointment General Abacha had hoped would get *The Guardian* to support the regime. However, the newspaper maintained a principled stand against the junta's rampant rights violations and self-succession plot disguised as transition to civil rule program. This led to the rather bizarre situation where the *Guardian* was proscribed while its publisher was still in government. Ibru was subsequently dropped from the cabinet and the assassination attempt was thought to be a payback for his 'betrayal' of the regime. In March 1995, the administration announced it had uncovered a coup plot to topple it. The claim was met with widespread skepticism as many saw it as yet another effort by an increasingly desperate regime to round up critics both within and outside the military. Among the accused were four senior journalists who each got a life sentence for being "accessories after the fact of treason" (Bourgault, 1998: 96). These and more led to a pervasive culture of fear as Nigeria became one vast gulag under General Abacha's ironfisted rule (see Ogbondah, 2003: 48-54).

⁷ For Nobel Laureate Wole Soyinka's reflection on General Abacha's bestial rule, see *The Open Sore of a Continent* (1996).

Not surprisingly, the critical, non-government press bore the major brunt of the regime's brutality both through draconian legislations and various extra-legal acts that sometimes bordered on crass criminality and state terrorism. Oddly, Abacha had in his maiden speech to the nation unbanned the five media organizations proscribed by his predecessor in the wake of the political crises engendered by the annulled June 12 presidential election. He also promised in the speech to uphold freedom of expression and human rights, efforts aimed at garnering public support for his new regime (Ogbondah, 2003: 5-6). But those promises rang hollow given the unprecedented degree of media repression that occurred on his watch. The following are some of the Abacha regime's most egregious anti-press legislations three of which specifically proscribed Nigeria's biggest private print media companies:

- **State Security (Detention of Persons) Decree No. 11 of 1994:** Enacted on August 18, 1994, *Decree No. 11*, like state security detention decrees of previous military governments, authorized the Chief of General Staff (the junta's second in command) or the Inspector-General of Police to detain for up to three months without judicial review, anyone considered a threat to state security. Upon review, the detaining authority could also extend the detention for a three month period at a time if the circumstances that triggered it persist. The decree basically provided the regime legal cover for the potentially indefinite detention of its critics top among them journalists, pro-democracy and human rights activists. And many critics of the administration were incarcerated for long periods (Ogbondah, 2003: 14-5).
- **The Three August 24, 1994 Decrees Proscribing the Three Largest Private Newspapers in Nigeria:** The junta promulgated three decrees on August 24, 1995 proscribing Nigeria's three largest and most influential private print media companies, the *Concord*, the *Guardian* and the *Punch*. *The Concord Newspapers and African Concord Weekly Magazine (Proscription and Prohibition from Circulation) Decree No. 6 of 1994* imposed a renewable six-month publication and circulation ban on the *Concord Newspapers* and its sister weekly newsmagazine -*African Concord*. While the decree was formally enacted on August 24, 1994, it was made retroactive to June 10, 1994, the day state security operatives shut down the company's premises. Published by the then incarcerated winner of the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential elections, M.K.O Abiola, *Concord* press expectedly aligned itself with pro-democracy groups in the country and was thus perceived by the regime as a threat to its survival (Ogbondah, 2003: 9-10).

The second of the August 24, 1994 anti-press decrees specifically targeted the *Punch* newspapers publishers of the *Punch* and the *Sunday Punch*. Titled, *The Punch Newspapers (Proscription and Prohibition from Circulation) Decree No. 7 of 1994*, the decree, like the *Concord* case, was for an initial six month period and also took retroactive effect to June 10, 1994 when security

officials shut down the company's premises (Ogbondah, 2003: 10-1). As one of the more critical of Nigeria's private newspapers, *Punch* has had run-ins with previous military governments and it was no surprise the Abacha regime had it firmly on its sights.

The third August 24, 1994 decree targeted the *Guardian* Press; an otherwise editorially circumspect newspaper that bring a lot of nuance and balance to its reportage. Titled *The Guardian Newspapers and African Guardian Weekly Magazine (Proscription and Prohibition fro Circulation) Decree No. 8 of 1994* the law proscribed for a period of six months all publications under the registered name of Guardian Newspapers Limited and Guardian Magazines Limited. Six publications were in all affected: *The Guardian*, *The Sunday Guardian*, *The Africa Guardian* (weekly news magazine), *The Guardian Express* (an evening paper), *The Financial Guardian* and the *Lagos Life* (a weekly tabloid). Unlike the *Concord* and *Punch* decrees, the *Guardian* decree had no retroactive effect as it was promulgated about the time security agents sealed the company's premises. And in a preemptory move to stop the company from coming out with new titles, the decree also outlawed "any other newspaper or magazine in any other form under whatsoever name, printed and published by the *Guardian* Newspapers Limited and the Guardian Magazines Limited or by any of their subsidiaries" (Ogbondah, 2003: 11-3).

All three companies, *Concord*, *Punch* and the *Guardian*, had their premises sealed for the duration of the proscription as required by their respective decrees. The government had claimed the companies (specifically, *Concord* and the *Punch*; the *Guardian* was not yet banned at the time) were stockpiling arms in their premises, an allegation they flatly denied given that their premises were searched by state security agents at the time of the forced closure and nothing incriminating was found. All three saw their proscriptions extended for another six months at the expiration of the first. However, at the expiration of the second six months in June 1995, the third extension of the proscription orders only applied to the *Concord* and the *Punch*. Following an apology to the Head of State General Abacha, the *Guardian* was unbanned on July 13, 1995 after 11 months of closure. The de-proscription of the *Guardian* followed a meeting with the government that was facilitated by the Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), in which the newspaper's management promised to be more sensitive in its reportage of agitations for a return to civil rule and the other socioeconomic and political problems plaguing the country. On his part, General Abacha asked the *Guardian* to "reciprocate the government's gesture of goodwill" in lifting the ban by avoiding the publication of materials capable of undermining national interest and security. Roughly 10 weeks later, on October 1, 1995, he used the occasion of his national day speech to also lift the ban on both the *Concord* and the *Punch* (Ogbondah, 2003: 11-4). Unfortunately, *Concord* never quite recovered from the proscription due in part to the heavy financial loses it incurred. However, it was the July 7, 1998 death of its publisher and presumed winner of the annulled presidential election M.K.O. Abiola while still in government custody that ultimately sealed the company's fate.

It perhaps deserves mention that the three publications, *Concord*, *Punch* and

the *Guardian*, had from the very beginning challenged their proscriptions in the law courts. In separate cases, they sought special and punitive monetary damages against the junta for loss of income as well as an order reopening their premises for regular business. In the *Concord* case for example, the Chief Judge of the Federal High Court, Babatunde Belgore on August 18, 1994 declared the proscription illegal and ordered the immediate reopening of the company. He also awarded 1.5 million Naira in damages against the junta for its unlawful occupation of the company's premises. In response to the judgment, the regime hurriedly enacted the proscription decrees and then made them retroactive to June 1994 when *Concord* and the *Punch* were arbitrarily shutdown (Ogbondah, 2003: 23-5).

- **Newspapers Registration Decree:** In a further attempt to muzzle the press, the General Abacha administration in July 1995 announced the establishment of the Newspapers Registration Board charged with the registration of all newspapers and magazines in Nigeria. It consequently issued an order requiring all existing newspapers and magazines to register with the board within 30 days of the directive. According to the directive, the registration should follow the provisions of the controversial "*Newspaper Registration Decree No. 43 of 1993*" discussed earlier in this chapter. The decree was promulgated by the previous administration of General Babangida in the wake of the media firestorm that greeted the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election during which a number of shadowy and unregistered publications appeared in the newsstands (see Ibelema, 2003). Basically, the decree required the annual licensing of newspapers and news magazines in the country which was contingent on the payment of substantial licensing fees and those responsible for a publication proving their competence, integrity and good character. This would leave the registration of newspapers or magazines completely in the hands of a board filled with junta loyalists. Also, the extremely high registration and non-refundable application fees amounted to severe financial strain on many media companies who had struggled to remain in business following over a decade of serious economic decline in Nigeria. Further proof of the decree's muzzling intent was evident in its imposition of severe monetary fine or ten year jail term for any editor who published a false report or rumor. However, *Decree 43 of 1993* was declared unconstitutional and void by the courts in two separate constitutional challenges instituted by the *Guardian* newspapers and a leading free speech activist Richard Akinola. The judgments were delivered on September 3, 1993 and November 17, 1993 while the unpopular and floundering interim national government was still in power. With the constitutionality of Decree 43 in doubt because of the court decisions, the new Abacha regime instead justified the directive on newspaper registration by invoking the "*Constitution, Modification and Suspension Decree No. 107 of 1993*" which gave the military government unfettered powers to make laws for the country. Oddly, while the newspaper registration directive derived its legitimacy from Decree 107, its implementation was to follow the provisions of Decree 43 already declared void by the law courts. In the end, the registration effort failed due largely to the intense opposition of the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) which ordered its members on the newspaper registration board to resign or face sanctions. The Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) comprises the

Newspapers Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ). Further, the NUJ also launched a fresh court challenge on the constitutionality of the newspaper registration board (Ogbondah, 2003: 17-20).

- **The ‘Stillborn’ National Mass Media Commission:** As part of General Abacha’s transition to civil rule program aimed solely at self perpetuation, he constituted a committee that produced a draft constitution in 1995. Section 154(q) of the 1995 Draft Constitution provided for the establishment of the *National Mass Media Commission* with responsibility to “coordinate, promote and regulate the existence of newspapers, magazines, and publications...as well as radio and television stations in the country”. The proposed agency was also “to coordinate the activities of all professional bodies of the mass media (and) to protect against intrusions and unwarranted inquiries into the private life of any person without his (*sic*) consent”. Among such responsibilities were the enforcement of professional standards and ethical code of conduct aimed at protecting individuals against media harassment and intimidation. Further, the draft constitution limited the ownership of any mass media with interstate coverage—print and electronic—to government corporations and publicly quoted companies. The *National Mass Media Commission* mirrored a similar agency proposed in the statist 1990 *National Mass Communication Policy* which the then General Babangida administration abandoned in 1992 in favor of gradual liberalization of broadcasting and telecommunications. Aside from encroaching into the responsibilities of already existing agencies like the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) and the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), critics also saw the *National Mass Media Commission* as antithetical to the democratic ideal of a free press. In opposing the proposed Commission, the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) stressed that “a free press is one of the important pillars of democracy and to entrench in the constitution provisions for the creation of a censorship agency is to undermine our aspiration for democracy”. General Abacha’s sudden death in 1998 meant the 1995 draft constitution and its contentious media provision never became law (Ogbondah, 2003: 20-1).

Far worse than the obnoxious media laws of the Abacha regime were the various extra-legal acts which it deployed against the critical press some of which bordered on terrorism. These include threats, intimidation, abductions, arrests, detention and torture of journalists and in some cases their spouses or immediate family members if the ‘offending’ journalist could not be found; arbitrary closure of media companies by security agents; determined efforts to disrupt production and or seizure of the printed copies of the publications either inside the media organization (if self-printed), at their printers’ or in the streets where vendors were either assaulted, threatened or arrested; buying up copies of the most critical publications from the newsstands and occasionally producing and circulating fake editions of them featuring complimentary stories about the administration. There were also coordinated sanctions like the withholding of

advertising support and subscription patronage by various government agencies. This along with the proscriptions had dire economic consequences for the survival of the targeted publications (Ogbondah, 2003: 35-47, Bourgault, 1998: 95). Fearful for their lives, many vendors, especially in the major commercial cities stopped carrying such feistier titles like *The News* and *Tell* magazines. And the few who did tucked them away and only sold to prospective customers if convinced they were not state security moles.

Growing more paranoid by every passing day of its 5 year reign of terror, the Abacha regime saw every non-government journalist as a potential enemy with the more critical ones locked up in the interest of national security. Many who eluded arrest fled into exile. Even foreign journalists were not spared as evidenced by the August 17, 1994 deportation of two reporters of the U.S. based Cable Network News (CNN) for alleged distorted and misleading coverage of political events in Nigeria. Also in 1994, William Keeling a freelancer with the *Financial Times* of London was deported for reporting the mismanagement of \$12.4 billion Gulf War oil windfall by the previous military regime of General Babangida. In January 1995, Paul Adams, the Nigerian correspondent of the *Financial Times* of London was detained for a week and charged with possessing seditious materials issued by the Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP). The charges were later dropped (Ogbondah, 2003: 37-9, 43, 81). However, a few months later, on November 7, 1995, the Abacha regime hanged 9 leaders of MOSOP including the writer and minority rights campaigner Ken Saro-Wiwa. A special tribunal headed by a civilian judge with military officers as members had convicted them of murder in a fundamentally flawed trial that one international legal expert described as “judicial murder” (see Soyinka, 1996: 145-153).

The December 1995 firebombing of the office of *The News* magazine by people suspected to be state security agents underscored the extent the regime was prepared to go to squelch press criticism. The same month (December 15), armed arsonists lit up the circulation department of *The Guardian* Newspapers and had it partially destroyed. Both attacks occurred in the wee hours of the morning under the cover of darkness (Ogbondah, 2003: 46-7). Perhaps emblematic of this siege was the 1996 mysterious disappearance of James Baguada Kaltho, the Northern Correspondent of *The News* Magazine. More than two years after he vanished, the police claimed he was killed while planting the bomb that exploded at Durbar Hotels Kaduna on January 18, 1996. His employers flatly rejected the allegation pointing to among other things, inconsistencies

between the police's original report on the bomb incident and the belated effort to link the reporter with the explosion. Besides, those who knew the missing reporter said it was totally inconceivable that someone like him who abhors violence in any form would be involved in planting a bomb. Given his many run-ins with state security operatives, the last of which happened shortly before he vanished, many in media circles believe he is a victim of state violence or what Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER) aptly called "censorship by elimination" (JODER Report, October/November 1998). Beside the October 17, 1986 assassination Dele Giwa, the founding Editor-in-Chief of Newswatch magazine, the death of Kaltho under the Abacha regime marked the second time in Nigeria that a journalist was killed in mysterious circumstances by suspected agents of the state.

The purported coup d' etat of March 1995 in which four senior journalists, a number of leading pro-democracy campaigners and several military officers were incarcerated further underscored the extent the General Abacha regime would go in suppressing dissent. Arraigned before an in camera special military tribunal on charges of treasonable felony were Chris Anyanwu, editor-in-chief of *The Sunday Magazine (TSM)*; Kunle Ajibade, editor of *The News*; George Mbah, assistant editor of *Tell Magazine*, and Ben Charles Obi, editor of the weekly soft-sell magazine *Weekend Classique*. The publications (in the case of *Tell*, its subsidiary *Dateline*) had featured stories that in some respect questioned the veracity of the junta's claim that there was indeed a coup plot. Following several months in dungeons operated by the Directorate of Military Intelligence (DMI) where they were routinely tortured physically and psychologically, the military tribunal found the four journalists guilty of being accessories to the act of treason (concealing information about the plot) and sentenced each to a life in prison. However, the ever 'beneficent' General Abacha would use his October 1, 1996 independence day speech to commute their life sentences to 15 year prison terms. The deplorable prison conditions took their toll on the journalists with Chris Anyanwu, the only female among them, losing her left eye in jail.⁸ In December 1997, the junta announced the uncovering of yet another coup plot allegedly masterminded by its second in command Lieutenant-General Oladipo Diya. Niran Malaolu, editor of the *Diet*

⁸ For insight into the prison experiences of these journalists under the Abacha regime, see Committee To Protect Journalists: 1999 "Outliving Abacha: Six Nigerian Journalists' Prison Stories").

newspapers was among those detained in connection with the new plot. He was handed a life prison term by a special military tribunal (Ogbondah, 2003: 39-46, 63).

Given the unprecedented brutality of the Abacha regime and its tight regulatory noose on broadcasting, it was not surprising that the nascent private broadcasting sector largely adopted the “protocol news” tradition long entrenched by their state-owned counterparts in which coverage of the regime’s activities were not only bereft of critical insights but often embarrassingly flattering (Bourgault, 1998: 94). In effect, the critical print media was alone in standing up to the regime and paid quite a heavy price for its intransigence. For instance, *Media Rights Monitor* in its annual report for 1997 recorded over 60 cases of attacks on journalists in the second half of the year alone making it the worst in Nigeria’s journalism history (Ogbondah, 2003: 46). In response to the brutality of the Abacha regime, particularly the incessant raids on critical print media companies, publications like *The News* and *Tell* adopted “guerilla journalism” approach in which they went underground and decentralized their editorial operations keeping them one step ahead of state security operatives. The phenomenon of ‘guerilla journalism’ in the context of democratization will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

General Abacha’s roughly five years of bestial rule came to an abrupt end following his sudden death on June 8, 1998 in what was thought to be a heart attack. Dubbed “the last despot” by the Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka (1996: 3-16), a report by the Nigeria-based Committee for the Defense of Human Rights (CDHR) put the number of political detainees at the time of his death at two hundred and seventy-four (Ogbondah, 2003: 52). The Abacha regime’s rampant rights violations and intransigence to global pleas for a quick and transparent return to civil rule turned Nigeria into a pariah nation suspended from the Commonwealth Group and under a broad range of sanctions from the United States of America (USA), the European Union (EU) and virtually every major Western country. Under his brutish regime, Nigeria literally sunk to a nadir and his death which triggered spontaneous outburst of celebrations across the country paved the way for a new and more conciliatory regime led by General Abdulsalam Abubakar who, as the Chief of Defense Staff at the time of Abacha’s death, was next in the military hierarchy. To ease political tension and foster national reconciliation, the General Abubakar regime released all political detainees including the five journalists convicted of treason. It also pledged to implement an expeditious and transparent transition to civil rule program. A brief but focused transition timetable led to the conduct of multi-party

elections and the subsequent inauguration of a civilian administration on May 29, 1999. The new civilian administration led by Olusegun Obasanjo, a retired General and one of those jailed over the 1995 phantom coup marked the first time since the short-lived second republic (1979-1983) that Nigeria has had a civilian government.

Three elections, four administrations and over a decade since the May 29, 1999 transition from military to civilian rule, what has changed in Nigeria's communications sector? Put differently, has democratization changed the structure and philosophy of the media in Nigeria? What key policies, legislations and regulatory frameworks have emerged in the context of democratization; how substantive are they; in which sectors have they occurred; what are the driving forces behind such changes; and to what extent have they fostered a more democratic media sphere? Pointedly, how has neoliberal democratization impacted the statist communication paradigm prevalent in Nigeria going back to independence? Have the interventions of media NGOs as a microcosm of civil society fostered a more democratic communications sector? A brief critical review of these questions will follow in the Chapter 3.

Chapter 4.

Institutional Frameworks and the Limits of Media Democratization in Post-Military Nigeria

As already observed, the critical watershed for the communications sector in Nigeria's tortuous march towards democratization came in 1992 when the General Ibrahim Babangida administration suddenly abandoned its highly statist 1990 *National Communication Policy* in favor of a more liberalized communications sector. The dramatic shift in policy led to the first incremental steps towards opening up Nigeria's broadcasting and telecommunications sector to private investors; the print media being largely privately driven dating back to the colonial period. This policy shift took effect by way of two key legislations. *Decree No. 38 of 1992* as amended by *Decree No. 55 of 1999* established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to regulate all aspects of broadcasting in the country. The Commission's subsequent licensing of 14 private niche market FM stations in May 1993 ended over 50 years of state monopoly of broadcasting in Nigeria. This however does not suggest a diminution of government control over broadcasting as the Commission is hardly an independent agency and the state retains a near monopoly of nationwide (coast to coast) transmission.

The second key legislation, *Decree No. 75 of 1992* as amended by *Decree No. 30 of 1998* established the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) to oversee all aspects of telecommunications in Nigeria and to facilitate private sector participation and investment in the sector. The legislation in principle ended state monopoly of telecommunications as embodied in the Nigerian Telecommunications (NITEL) Plc, a crown corporation under the Ministry of Communication. Although the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) became operational in July 1993, no comprehensive policies, standards and frameworks for the liberalization of the telecommunication sector were developed at this time. This resulted in a very chaotic process in which licenses were arbitrarily handed out to cronies and in some cases speculators who had no background or track record in the services they were licensed to

provide. It was not until 1995 that the first national policy on telecommunications was developed and it took another three years for it to be approved and published. The delay was due in part to the political crises that engulfed the country following the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential elections; a situation further complicated by the General Abacha regime's disinterest in the liberalization policies of the previous military government. However, the transitional regime of General Abdulsalami Abubakar which came to power following General Abacha's death on June 7, 1998 renewed interest in liberalization by promulgating the *Public Enterprises (Privatization and Commercialization) Decree 1999*. While the Decree was formally enacted on May 10, 1999, it was made retroactive to December 31, 1998 to provide legal cover for the program which the administration had been pursuing since July 20, 1998 when it announced government would privatize its investments in several sectors including telecommunications.

The legislation repealed the *Bureau of Public Enterprises Decree 1993* and sought to further liberalize the economy through the privatization and commercialization of corporations fully or partially owned by the federal government. Pursuant to this, it established the *National Council on Privatization* which would determine among other things the political, economic and social objectives of privatization and commercialization, the public enterprises to be privatized or commercialized and the appropriate time to do so. The Council was composed of the Chief of General Staff (the military administration's equivalent of a Vice President) as chair, the Minister of Finance as Vice Chair, the Attorney-General of the Federation and Minister of Justice, the Ministers of Industries and National Planning, the Secretary to the Federal Government, the Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, the Director-General of the Bureau of Public Enterprises, the Economic Adviser to the Head of State and four other members to be appointed by the Head of State. The Decree also restructured the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) to enhance its effectiveness in implementing the Council's policies and realizing its overall objectives. Companies under the scheme were categorized into four groups—full privatization, partial privatization, full commercialization and partial commercialization.

With the May 29, 1999 handover of power to an elected civilian government, the Decree, like other military era legislations were automatically designated acts of parliament. The new civilian administration of retired General Olusegun Obasanjo was

not only enthusiastic about the economic liberalization program but also accelerated the process. For instance, on July 6, 1999, roughly a month after the regime was inaugurated, the President through an Executive Order directed the 'immediate' implementation of the "Second Privatization Program" of the government which would run in three phases: (a) Full divestiture of government shares in oil marketing companies, banks and cement plants; (b) full divestiture of government ownership in hotels, vehicle assembly plants and other industrial interests in competitive markets; (c) partial divestiture of federal government interests in non-competitive utility sectors like electric power, oil and gas and telecommunications where the state hitherto enjoyed a monopoly. Under the program, NITEL Plc, the State-controlled telecommunications operator was the only corporation in the communications sector slated for privatization. In contrast, other government-owned communication entities such as the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), the Nigerian Film Corporation and the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) were instead earmarked for "partial commercialization" which required them to generate enough revenue to cover their operating costs with the State providing capital funding when necessary. The Executive Order was unequivocal about the primary goal of the new civilian regime's privatization and commercialization program: "to make the private sector the leading engine of growth of the Nigerian economy" and in so doing "reintegrate Nigeria back into the global economy, as a platform to attract direct foreign investment in an open, fair and transparent manner". The core objectives of the privatization and commercialization program as outlined by the new civilian government include:

1. To send a clear message to the local and international community that a new transparent Nigeria is now open for business;
2. To restructure and rationalize the public sector in order to substantially reduce the dominance of unproductive government investment in the sector;
3. To change the orientation of all public enterprises engaged in economic activities towards a new horizon of performance improvement, viability and overall efficiency;
4. To ensure positive returns on public sector investments in commercialized enterprises, through more efficient private sector-oriented management;
5. To check the present absolute dependence on the Treasury for funding by otherwise commercially oriented parastatals and so, encourage their recourse to both local and international capital markets for their funding needs;

6. To initiate the process of gradual cession to the private sector of public enterprises which are better operated by the private sector;
7. To create jobs, acquire new knowledge, skills and technology, and expose Nigeria to international competition.

At the subsequent July 20, 1999 inauguration of the National Council on Privatization, President Olusegun Obasanjo reiterated the importance and urgency of the privatization program which he argued is “imperative” to Nigeria’s sustainable economic growth and development (National Council on Privatization, 2000).

Although the communications sector relative to other areas of the economy has been peripheral to the broader liberalization effort, democratization has nonetheless impacted it in some profound, even if not necessarily positive ways. Ten years since the end of military rule, at least two key trends have emerged in the context of democratization and communication in Nigeria. First is the selective adoption of neoliberal principles relative to the economic and political interests of Nigeria’s ruling elites as evidenced in the somewhat contrasting policies around telecommunications and broadcasting and the regulatory regimes for each. The second speaks to the abject lack of substantive legislative, policy and regulatory media reforms required of a democratic society.

From the outset, successive Nigerian governments have been wary of broadcasting liberalization as a key component of democratization. Such apprehension understandably was borne out of the enormous influence of broadcasting, particularly radio as the most popular medium of mass communication in the country; the control of which is crucial to the acquisition and consolidation of state power. In contrast, telecommunications liberalization was largely viewed as a safe policy bet whose potential as an enormous source of revenue for the government far outweighed its political risks. Thus faced with the liberalizing imperatives of democratization, they opted for a selective application of neoliberal policies based on enlightened self-interest or what, for lack of a better term I will call neo-liberalism of convenience. This is amply demonstrated in the government’s categorical policy towards the total deregulation of the telecommunications sector; a major plank of which is the full privatization of the state-owned monopoly NITEL Plc. In contrast, the broadcasting sector has witnessed only modest liberalization by way of the licensing of mostly limited range, niche market private operators both in radio and television. Unlike NITEL Plc, the two key government

corporations in the broadcasting sector, the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), came under partial commercialization which has kept them wholly state-owned and controlled and with continuing monopoly of coast-to-coast (nationwide) transmission. It was only in late 2009 that the government, albeit reluctantly, allowed the broadcasting commission to license two other national broadcasters (one each for radio and television) to compete with the government corporations. Following the end of military rule in May 1999, media NGOs and private broadcasters have been persistent in demanding for the liberalization of nationwide broadcasting. It must be stressed that the non-privatization of government broadcasting corporations and the coast to coast transmission monopoly they still enjoy is not borne out of altruistic public service considerations but instead on an entrenched culture of abuse in which the control of broadcasting is critical to the acquisition and consolidation of state power. As demonstrated in previous chapters, successive governments dating back to independence in 1960 have always appropriated broadcasting for their selfish ends and not even the liberalizing demands of democratization would change that.

Given the government's commitment to a full deregulation of telecommunication, it is not surprising that the sector has witnessed a number of pro-market policies and legislations since the end of military rule even as broadcasting, for the most part, continues to stagnate under military era policies and laws. The basic framework for Nigeria's telecommunications reform program is the *National Telecommunications Policy* which came into effect in September 2000. The document is the product of a 22-member Telecommunications Sector Reform Implementation Committee (TSRIC) which was established in February 2000 under the aegis of the National Council on Privatization to undertake a comprehensive review of existing policies (including the 1998 National Telecommunications Policy) with a view to developing proactive practices that would facilitate the full liberalization and private sector-driven growth of the industry. The policy document identified a raft of short term (3 years) and medium term (5 years) goals that include meeting or exceeding the ITU recommended teledensity ratio of 1 telephone to 100 people; promoting widespread access to such advanced communications technologies and services like the internet; establishing a National Frequency Management Council (NFMC) under the Ministry of Communication with responsibility for the efficient, accountable and transparent management and allocation of radio spectrum; reviewing existing telecommunications laws to bring all operators under the

control of the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), and fostering a new and sufficiently flexible regulatory environment capable of accommodating new technological developments and the global trend towards convergence (National Telecommunications Policy 2000: 23-6). The need for a regulatory framework more in line with the demands of a market-driven telecommunications sector led to the enactment of the *Nigerian Communications Act of 2003*. The Act not only repealed the *Nigerian Communications Commission Decree No. 75 of 1992* (as amended by *Decree No. 30 of 1998*) but also formally established a National Frequency Management Council (NFMC) under the headship of the Minister of Communications. Given that a primary objective of the 2003 Act is to foster local and foreign private sector investment in telecommunications, the legislation sought to enhance the regulatory framework by granting the NCC a bit more autonomy than was previously the case. Under the previous legislation, the commission was largely an extension of the communications ministry and directly responsible to the Minister who had ultimate authority over its decisions and regulations. However, in the current dispensation, the Minister's role is more restricted to the formulation of general policies on how the telecommunications sector can facilitate the economic and social development of the country. And while the Minister can from time to time notify the commission about government's broad policy directions, Section 25 (2) of the Act was emphatic that 'In the execution of his (*sic*) functions and relationship with the Commission, the Minister shall at all times ensure that the independence of the Commission, in regard to the discharge of its functions and operations..., is protected and not compromised in any manner whatsoever". Although this clearly is an improvement on the previous two telecoms legislations, the autonomy of the Commission is at best relative as its members serve at the discretion of the President (Nigerian Communications Act, 2003).

In contrast to the more pro-market policy and legislative changes witnessed in telecommunications, the broadcasting sector continues to stagnate under military era statutes well over 10 years after the return of civil rule. For one, the *National Broadcasting Commission Decree No. 38 of 1992* (as amended by *Decree No. 55 of 1999*) remains the regulatory framework for broadcasting in Nigeria. The decree which automatically became an act of parliament in 1999 established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) with little to no regulatory autonomy. The lack of independence is apparent in such key areas as the composition of the Commission's

board; whose members are appointed by and serve at the behest of the President who also has the ultimate authority to issue broadcast licenses with the Commission merely playing an advisory role. Fundamentally, the broadcasting commission operates as an extension of the Ministry of Information and is required to take general directives from the Minister in the discharge of its duties with its regulatory decisions also subject to ministerial approval. Leading up to the 1999 disengagement of the military from power, the decree underwent a minor amendment which ironically increased government control by adding a representative of the State Security Services (SSS) and the Ministry of Information to the commission's board. With the exception of the *Nigeria Broadcasting Code of 2003* which in many respects is a highly restrictive document (see Chapter 5), not much has happened in the broadcast sector by way of new policies and legislations as successive civilian regimes appear to pay lip service to genuine broadcasting liberalization. Thus while a relatively autonomous Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) is considered vital to a deregulated telecommunications sector, a functionally independent National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) so critical to substantive political liberalization remains hobbled by overly restrictive laws and direct government control. Although the idea of a mega-regulator in which the NCC takes over the NBC (as is the case in many countries) has been muted for some time now, it remains to be seen if and how Nigeria's selective application of neoliberal values in telecommunications and broadcasting will be reconciled under a single regulatory framework.

The second and somewhat related trend in the dialectics of communication and democratization in Nigeria is the abject lack of substantive legislative, policy and regulatory reforms expected of a democratic society. Curiously, the pro-market Telecommunications Act of 2003 mentioned earlier is about the only major communications-related legislation to be enacted in the 10 years since the end of military rule. The other existing legislations were either military decrees which automatically became acts of parliament with little or no changes to their spirit and letter, or anachronistic and often draconian statutes like those on sedition that date back to colonial times. The most obnoxious of such legislations particularly those that directly infringe on press freedom will be discussed in Chapter 4.

In the face of government apathy to substantive legislative and policy reforms in the media and communications sector, the burgeoning local media NGO community has taken it up as their key issue. Aside from the local chapter of Amnesty International, the

first indigenous human rights NGOs in Nigeria emerged around the late 1980s primarily in response to the growing excesses of successive military governments. Such pioneering groups like the Civil Liberties Organization (1988) and the Constitutional Rights Project (1990) as their names suggest dealt with a wide range of human rights violations of which press freedom is only a tiny part of. It was not until the early to mid-1990s that the earliest NGOs exclusively concerned with the mass media and the broader legislative and regulatory framework under which they operate came into existence. The first and arguably most prominent of such groups is Media Rights Agenda (MRA) which was founded in August 1993 by a group of mid-career journalists concerned by the worsening military repression of the critical press. Precisely, the same reason led two other groups of journalists to form the Center for Free Speech (CFS) and Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER) in 1995.

Under military rule, the media NGOs focused primarily on such things as documenting the rampant violations of press freedom and other human rights abuses and alerting the world about them through organizations like Amnesty International, and the International Freedom of Expression Exchange (IFEX); litigating on broad issues of freedom of expression, especially with respect to journalists whose rights have been violated, and joining the broader Nigerian pro-democracy community in lobbying for international sanctions against the junta. However, with the end of military rule in 1999, their focus shifted markedly to policy advocacy around legislative and regulatory reforms in the media sector. The new democratic dispensation also gave rise to organizations like the Institute of Media and Society (IMS) which was founded in 2000 to facilitate popular participation in governance and development by improving the communicative capacity of all stakeholders in the development process particularly Nigeria's marginalized rural majority (Aginam, 2008).

At the core of the NGOs policy reform advocacy was the *Media for Democracy Program*; a European Commission (EC) funded initiative aimed at fostering a democratic media culture in transitional societies. Although the program was originally conceived by the Brussels-based International Federation of Journalists in association with Reporters without Borders (Paris), Article 19 (London) and the West African Journalists Association (Dakar), the insistence of the European Commission on local NGO involvement in the program caused the initiators to forge partnerships with three local organizations: the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), the Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER) and the

Independent Journalism Center (IJC). The program took off in 1999 with the broad objective of assisting the Nigerian media in its transition from military despotism to civil rule. To this end, it started the *Fourth Estate Journal*, a bi-monthly magazine published by JODER and the Independent Journalism Center (IJC) to monitor not just infractions on media freedom but also threats to freedom of expression and association of all Nigerians (Adeoye, 2004, Ojo 2004). The *Media for Democracy Program* also established in 1999 the International Press Center (IPC) to facilitate the transformation of the Nigerian press from a stridently combative opponent of military dictatorship to an ethically sound and socially responsible conveyor of democratic politics. Based in Lagos, Nigeria's bustling media capital, the center stresses media 'professionalization' through the training and retraining of journalists as well as the publication of useful media literature many of which are the products of its seminars and workshops. It also serves as a technological and information resource center for journalists and other civil society groups trying to engage the mass media. In addition, the center conducts periodic reviews of local media coverage of major issues and events to determine if they meet the standards of balance and social responsibility. Some of the issues the center has so far reviewed include local media coverage of the transition program and national elections, access to justice by lower cadres of society, the conduct of democratic politics, terrorism related issues following the 9/11 attacks in the U.S. and ethno-religious conflicts among others. The IPC usually sends its findings to media organizations with the hope that they can take voluntary measures to improve their coverage but had also on occasions followed up the reviews with training workshops to enhance the media's capacity to cover the issues in a socially-responsive way (Arogundade 2004).

However, it was the legislative advocacy component of the *Media for Democracy Program* that best underscores the minimalist nature of Nigeria's democratization as evidenced in the rather duplicitous conduct of her post-military governments in fostering a genuine democratic media culture. This component of the program which was primarily handled by Media Rights Agenda (MRA) (on behalf of its partners in the media for democracy coalition) sought to establish a legal and institutional framework that among other things guarantees the freedom of expression of all citizens, ensures the independence of all regulatory agencies in the media sector and fosters accountability and transparency in public life. Following extensive consultation with a diverse range of stakeholders both within and outside the media, the MRA introduced two key bills: *The*

Access to Information Bill in 1999 and *The Nigerian Media Bill* in 2001. The proposed access to information legislation and the bizarre politics that have sometimes dogged it will be discussed in some details at the end of this chapter as symptomatic of the severe limits of media democratization in Nigeria.

The *Media Bill* on its part had two primary goals—to harmonize disparate media laws that are currently scattered under several statutes into a single and easily accessible document; and to comprehensively review such legislations, some of which date back to colonial times by bringing them up to international democratic standards. The bill also includes laws that are not be directly related to the media but may have implications for it (Ojo 2004). Needless to add the media bill was ‘dead on arrival’ as members of both the upper and lower legislative houses never gave it any consideration. A key part of the proposed bill rejected the current framework for broadcasting regulation which places the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) under the control of the Minister of Information. It instead proposed a completely independent and transparent commission with full constitutional powers to regulate all aspects of broadcasting in the country and one which also respects the editorial autonomy of all broadcasters—public and private (The Nigerian Media Bill 1999). A separate study in 2001 by Media Rights Agenda (MRA) and Article 19 offered a stinging critique of the many legal and institutional restrictions on broadcasting and telecommunications regulation in Nigeria and called for the immediate overhaul of the existing framework to reflect the new democratic ethos (MRA and Article 19, 2001). Similar concerns over state abuse of communication in Africa influenced the May 2001 adoption of the *African Charter on Broadcasting* by some of the continent’s leading NGOs including many of the Nigerian groups. Sponsored by UNESCO in partnership with the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) the charter demands among other things : the establishment of a three-tier system of broadcasting – public service, commercial and community; guaranteed autonomy for all public authorities involved in broadcasting and telecommunications regulation; a transparent and participatory spectrum allocation and licensing process; the transformation of all government controlled-broadcasting outlets into truly public service corporations, and the adequate funding of such corporations that is not subject to the shenanigans of some political office holders. With respect to telecommunications, the charter made universal service and access the key conditions for the liberalization of the sector while also urging member-states of UNESCO to prevail on the World Trade

Organization (WTO) to recognize broadcasting productions as cultural goods deserving exemption under global trade rules (African Charter on Broadcasting, 2001, <http://www.misa.org/broadcasting/brochure.pdf>). In October 2002, provisions of the broadcasting charter were incorporated into the African Commission of Human and Peoples Rights' (ACHPR) "Declaration on Freedom of Expression in Africa". The charter has since become the benchmark for broadcasting reform campaigns all over continent and was also the centerpiece of the African media NGOs contribution at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva (December 2003) and Tunisia (November 2005). The charter's recognition of community broadcasting as a critical resource in empowering the continent's often marginalized rural majorities undoubtedly helped sensitize the Nigerian NGO community on the issue. Led by the Institute of Media and Society (IMS) in partnership with the Montreal-based World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC), and the Panos Institute for West Africa, the Nigerian coalition on community radio has through sustained advocacy and campaigns helped bring the often ignored sector into the mix of policy debates about media democratization in post-military Nigeria (see Chapter 5). Nigeria lags behind many African countries in community broadcasting primarily due to government paranoia on the potential implications of such grassroots media for 'national security', which it must be stressed, is often equated with regime security. For example, the 1992 legislation that created the Nigeria Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was silent on community broadcasting. It was not until 2003 that the commission's updated code recognized two types of community broadcasting—communal (rural) and campus (university) broadcasting. Despite the recognition, a de facto ban remained in place as no community broadcasters were licensed with the exception of the campus radio at the University of Lagos. In February 2005, the NBC announced it was finally ready to license non-profit community broadcasters who must be community-owned and committed to serving the communal and developmental needs of their communities. While eight other educational institutions (all with Mass Communication programs) were approved to operate campus radios in 2006, no community (communal) radio license has yet been granted by the commission despite interest by at least eight community groups (See Ojebode and Akingbulu, 2009).

This is particularly troubling given that about 70 per cent of Nigeria's estimated 151 million people who live in rural and sometimes very remote communities continue to

rely on the patrimonial programming of often urban based broadcasters (state and privately-owned) as their primary means of information. Quite often, such top-down programming not only lack relevance to the immediate socioeconomic needs of the communities but can also be disempowering as it reduces them to mere receivers and not producers of information. Unlike Nigeria, several countries in the West African region appear more enthusiastic about community broadcasting. By 2006, Mali had 120 community radios, Senegal 44, Burkina Faso 27, Niger Republic 24, Republic of Benin 22, and Ghana 8 (Dada, 2007). Apparently, Nigeria's post-military governments remain lukewarm to the idea of community radios even if many both within and outside the local media NGO community see such grassroots media as critical to popular participation in governance and development. The politics of community radio in the context of democratization will be further discussed in Chapter 5.

The stalemate over the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) which has prevented its inauguration since 1999 further underscores the democratic limits of Nigeria's media policies. Nigerian media professionals have historically resisted attempts by governments to control the practice of journalism through the mechanism of a press council. For instance, when the General Obasanjo administration promulgated the *Nigerian Press Council Decree No. 31 of 1978*, media professionals under the aegis of the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) boycotted it over several provisions they found inimical to press freedom. The same applied to the *Nigerian Media Council Decree No. 59 of 1988* promulgated by the General Babangida regime (Obe, 2000, 40-50). A compromise emerged in the form of the *Nigerian Press Council Decree No. 85 of 1992* which led to the eventual inauguration of the council on December 29, 1992. The council's mandate include promoting the highest ethical and professional standards for the press and adjudicating on complaints from the public against the media as well as complaints from media practitioners against the government or corporate bodies. The compromise legislation managed to strike a rather delicate balance between press freedom and a government funded press council. Although by no means perfect, the system worked relatively well with the council adjudicating on several cases brought before it (Omole, 2000, Omang, 2000). However, on May 26, 1999, just three days before it handed over power to the elected civilian government, the General Abdulsalami Abubakar administration sneakily amended the press council decree by introducing provisions that media professionals found antithetical to press freedom. Unlike the

originating legislation, the *NPC (Amendment) Decree No. 60 of 1999* gave the council at least two additional responsibilities: broad powers to monitor the press and ensure journalists comply with the code of professional conduct; and the authority to register all print media to ensure that publishers/owners stay true to their mission statements and stated objectives. Section 26 of the decree as amended requires the following from publications seeking documentation: (a) a brief mission statement and objectives of the newspaper, magazine or journal (b) the title or name of the publication (c) the full address of the location of the office of the publication (d) the name of the corporate body which owns or intends to publish the media (e) a copy of the certificate of incorporation and (f) any other information as the council may require. The documentation which is subject to renewal every year and also requires the owner/publisher to submit to the council within 60 days of its expiration an application showing that the publication fulfilled its mission statement and objectives and was at all times guided by the code of professional conduct in its discussion of issues of public interest. The decree as amended also prescribes harsh penalties (a combination of fine and jail time) for such offences as owning, publishing, printing and selling of an undocumented publication (Nigerian Press Council, 1999). In truth, the press council amendment decree was literally a sneaky reintroduction of the infamous *Newspaper Registration Decree No. 43 of 1993* discussed earlier in this chapter. Although the newspaper registration decree was formally repealed by the *Newspaper (Repeal) Decree No. 57 of 1999*, its key provisions were incorporated as an amendment to the Press Council decree. Not surprisingly, the amendment met with strong opposition from both media NGOs and professional press organizations under the aegis of the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO). Member organizations of the NPO—the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) and the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ)—who have statutory representation on the press council’s board unanimously decided to boycott the council until the obnoxious provisions are repealed. Curiously, the new civilian government which inherited the law would not budge forcing both the NPAN and Media Rights Agenda (MRA) to challenge the legislation in court. In its suit, the MRA argued that the registration provision not only violates freedom of expression as guaranteed by Section 39 of the 1999 Constitution and Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights but that its penal and pecuniary sanctions could have a chilling effect on both publishers and journalists (MRA, 1999).

Ten years since the end of military rule, the impasse persists as the case continues to make its way through Nigeria's notoriously slow judicial system and the country remains without a functional press council. Yet, even the press council standoff pales in comparison with the rather byzantine politics surrounding the proposed access to information legislation. And since that arguably best exemplifies the severe democratic deficit of Nigeria's post-military media policies, it deserves some in-depth discussion.

4.1. The Freedom of Information Bill and the Limits of Media Democratization in Nigeria

The idea of a freedom of information legislation in Nigeria was first conceived around 1993 by three non-government organizations, the Media Rights Agenda (MRA), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), all working independently of each other. The groups later decided to collaborate on the issue and in 1994 came up with a draft legislation based largely on a survey of Nigerian journalists and a review of access laws in other countries. The draft legislation was further scrutinized in various workshops by stakeholders with a view to forging a consensus on its core aspects. But that initial effort came to naught as the military which remained in power beyond the initial 1993 disengagement date had no interest in enacting a legislation that could dramatically open up government to public scrutiny (MRA, 2003: 3-7). However, following the 1999 elections that ended 15 years of successive military rule, the campaign was revived this time as a major plank of the European Commission—sponsored 'Media for Democracy Program'. The MRA would again emerge as the arrow head of the renewed effort but this time with a much broader coalition of over 100 civil society organizations that includes prominent groups like the Nigerian Labor Congress (NLC), the Academic Staff Union of Nigerian Universities (ASUU), Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE), Amnesty International Nigeria, Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) among others (Freedom of Information Coalition, 2009).

The end of military dictatorship coupled with the new civilian administration's pledge to introduce an anti-corruption bill in parliament appeared to suggest a perfect timing for a re-launch of the access to information campaign. The MRA-led coalition not only strongly endorsed President Olusegun Obasanjo's anti-corruption stance but also implored him to personally present the draft access legislation to parliament since such a

law would foster transparency and accountability in public life. The President declined and instead advised the coalition to take the bill directly to the National Assembly (MRA, 2003: 8). Given the decades of maladministration in Nigeria characterized by personalization of power, endemic corruption, abuse of due process and disregard for the rule of law, the initial major challenge for the coalition was to change the perception in government circles that the access legislation was primarily aimed at giving more powers to what most of them felt was an already obstreperous press. While not disputing that the bill would also benefit the press, the coalition sought to frame it primarily as a citizens' legislation which would empower every Nigerian to play a more active role in the political process as access to information about government programs and activities would lead to greater participation in policy formulation and implementation (Ojo, 2004).

The initial advocacy took the form of numerous formal and informal outreaches to legislators both individually and in groups with a view to educating them about the bill and securing their support. Effort were also made to sensitize as many government departments and agencies as possible on the importance of the bill particularly those whose core responsibilities are somewhat tied to it. The media was also brought into the loop to ensure a robust coverage of the campaign (MRA, 2003: 13-4). The *Access to Information Bill* along with the 'media bill' discussed earlier was introduced in the House of Representatives (the lower legislative assembly) in the second half of 1999. Following the bill's introduction, officials of the coalition intensified their lobbying efforts which strangely included organizing social gatherings for the elected representatives some of who allegedly demanded money as a condition for supporting the bill (MRA, 2003: 14). Although leaders of the coalition rebuffed requests for monetary inducement, the bill was nonetheless fast tracked with the first and second readings taking place between February 22 and March 13, 2000. Support for the bill in the lower house was so overwhelming that it bypassed a public hearing and went directly to the Information Committee. Unfortunately, the committee's favorable recommendation was yet to be presented to the full House when a long simmering power tussle between the President and the leadership of the National Assembly degenerated into a full blown fight. This factionalized the legislature into two camps and virtually all legislative matters took back seat as the assembly leadership kept tinkering with the composition of various committees to ensure they were controlled by members loyal to it.

Despite the bedlam, the coalition kept pushing for further action on the bill and it was not until March 15, 2001 (one year after the second reading) that the information committee finally got to present its report to the House. But in a rather bizarre twist of events, the same House that unanimously exempted the bill from a public hearing suddenly voted to summarily kill it for bypassing that stage. However, the bill's supporters who were now clearly in the minority managed to save it by agreeing to a public hearing. The public hearing to be conducted by the information committee was delayed for months purportedly due to lack of funds but was eventually held after the MRA-led coalition agreed to bear a substantial percentage of the costs. But then, for some inexplicable reasons, the committee's report of the public hearing was not presented to the House before the dissolution of the legislature in 2003 (MRA, 2003: 30-6). And so the process began afresh under a new parliament in President Obasanjo's second four-year term with the coalition even more determined to actualize the legislation. Aside from initiating fresh outreach to the new parliament and broadening its base within the civil society community, the coalition also used the media to good effect as its sustained coverage of the campaign helped build a groundswell of public support for the proposed legislation. The House of Representatives (lower house) consequently passed the FOI bill on August 25, 2004 and was followed two years later by the Senate (upper house) on November 15, 2006. Both versions of the bill were harmonized in conference on February 14, 2007 with the final draft sent to the President for his assent in March of 2007. Strangely, the President refused to sign the legislation and the National Assembly ignored the coalition's entreaties to override the presidential veto with a two-third majority vote. At a meeting with leaders of civil society groups on April 27, 2007, President Obasanjo labored to defend his decision not to sign the bill into law. Asked by the Executive Director of MRA, Edetaen Ojo when he would assent to the bill, the President first denied ever receiving the harmonized bill from parliament it but quickly added that even if he did, he would not sign it in its current form as it could threaten national security. He further said he was opposed to the bill's title "Freedom of Information" claiming the National Assembly ignored his preferred title "Right to Information". When reminded by the Executive Director of MRA that minor disagreement over the bill's title should not vitiate its substance and overall objectives, the President shot back saying 'freedom of information' is an imported idea. Then he asked his audience if they knew that certain sensitive government information should never be released to the public to which the MRA leader replied that national security concerns

were taken into consideration in drafting the legislation. The MRA leader then referred the President to Section 13(1) of the bill which states that “The head of a government or public institution may refuse to disclose any record, the disclosure of which may be injurious to the conduct of international affairs or the defense of the Federal Republic of Nigeria”. Unimpressed, President Obasanjo argued that the bill only excludes records which may be injurious to the ‘defense’ of Nigeria but not her ‘security’ stressing that defense and security are different. Reminded by the MRA leader that various law enforcement, security and intelligence agencies made input in the bill during the legislative process and found the provision acceptable, the President merely dismissed them as lower level personnel who did not grasp the full implications of the provision because they don’t practice “security at the level which I practice it”. The President also said he was unequivocally opposed to Section 13(2) of the Bill which allows the courts to override the refusal by the head of government or public institution to disclose information if such a disclosure is found to be in the public interest. All efforts to salvage the bill failed including appeals for him to reach out to the National Assembly with his rather phony concerns (MRA 2007(a). President Obasanjo’s apparent red herring that at times bordered on the ludicrous effectively ended any hope of a freedom of information legislation during the first 8 years of Nigeria’s post-military governance. Obasanjo left office on May 29, 2007 at the end of his second and final term without assenting to the FOI bill and was succeeded by his handpicked protégé President Umaru Ya’radua who despite promising to run a transparent government began by swearing his personal staff to an oath of secrecy.

Not surprisingly, the FOI campaign met with the same shenanigan from both the new administration and the new National Assembly despite their public declarations of support for the bill. Increasingly convinced of government’s apathy to the bill, the FOI coalition re-launched the campaign in September 2007 with a signature drive aimed at pressuring lawmakers to pass the legislation by the end of the year. The petition which sought to secure at least one million signatures from Nigerians at home and in the Diaspora expressed concern over the inordinate delay in passing the legislation arguing that failure to enact the law “undermines democratic and accountable governance by denying us our fundamental right to know and participate fully in the government of our country”. The petition further characterized the proposed legislation as a “human right” since “the right of citizens to access public information underpins a democratic system of

government and is a core requirement of good governance” (MRA, 2007(b)). Growing public pressure as a result of the coalition’s renewed campaigns, in part caused the National Assembly to reconsider the bill. However, on April 29, 2008, the House of Representatives again threw out the bill following a technical voice-vote that stopped it from going through a third reading by a committee of the whole House. The surprising voice-vote followed the refusal of the bill’s chief sponsor Ms. Abike Dabiri (a former journalist) to let the House leadership drop it from the day’s business as it had done on four previous occasions. The House leadership’s move to stand down the bill was merely a pretext as it later emerged that some influential members of the House had agreed to “kill the bill” prior to that day’s sitting. Many of the House members who had previously held public offices were said to be afraid that the proposed legislation could be used to dig up their past misdeeds (MRA 2008(a)). The House expectedly action drew widespread criticism from Nigerians of diverse political, economic, cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds with the harshest rebuke coming from professional organizations and pro-democracy and human rights groups within the broader civil society community (MRA 2008(b)).

In the upper chamber the Senate, the bill went through the second reading on January 30, 2008 and was overwhelmingly endorsed by Senators by way of a voice vote. It was then passed to the Committee on Information and Media which, was given a week to report back to the upper house. However, the one week deadline inexplicably turned into months of delay which the Committee’s chairman, Ayogu Eze (also a former journalist) described as an “administrative process” aimed at reaching out to the various groups interested in the bill with a view to developing a compromise legislation that will be acceptable to all (MRA 2008(c)). Months later, he justified the continuing delay on the need for the committee to engage in a careful and thoughtful deliberation of the bill as it “touches on the lives and liberties of Nigerians” (MRA, 2008(d)). On June 2, 2008, the Senate eventually held a public hearing on the bill following which the committee proposed some amendments that critics denounced as a travesty of a real access to information legislation. For example, Section 2 of the Bill as amended provides as follows,

Every citizen of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, has a legally enforceable right to, and shall, on application be given access to any information or record under the control of a government or public institution or private companies performing public functions, provided the disclosure of such

information or release of such record(s) shall not compromise national security and that the applicant shall have satisfied a State or Federal High Court of the need for the disclosure of such information or release of such record(s).

In essence, the provision requires citizens to first justify before a court of law why they require any information, document or record; convince the court that the information sought is not detrimental to national security; and obtain the court's approval before applying to the relevant public institution for the information, record or document. Dismissing the Committee chairman's argument that the amendment was necessary to ensure the legislation is not abused MRA Executive Director Edetaen Ojo argued that on the contrary the provision would severely encumber the use of the legislation given the enormous burden it places on citizens making it unarguably the "worst access to information law in the world". As Ojo argues,

anyone vaguely familiar with the Nigerian judicial system knows that it could easily take years for a citizen to even go through this first hurdle, in addition to the unwarranted costs such a citizen would have to incur to engage a lawyer and pay court fees just to be able to apply for information from a government institution, no matter how routine or harmless the information required. The net effect is that no one would use such a law.

(MRA, 2008e)

During a courtesy visit on October 9, 2008, Senate President David Mark (a retired Army General) told a delegation from the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE) that the Senate would only pass the Freedom of Information legislation if it includes punitive sanctions for libel. Reiterating the mantra that they are all in support of the legislation as it will benefit both the media and the entire citizenry, he however accused the media of seeking unlimited freedom without responsibility. According to him, making libel a criminal offence under the proposed access law will help deter journalists from publishing inaccurate information particularly in the light of the fact that the Press Council which should monitor the press is not functional (Aziken, Emmanuel and Inalegwu Shuaibu, 2008).

Roughly 11 years and three four-year legislative seasons since military rule ended in May 1999, the access to information bill continues its circuitous and uncertain journey. Someday, Nigeria will pass an access to information legislation of some sorts. But whether it will be worth the paper it is written on as is the case in many countries is

entirely another matter. Yet the FOI imbroglio underscores the minimalist nature of Nigeria's democratization where the transition has not been followed by a consolidatory phase of substantive policy and legislative reforms required of a democratic society.

Chapter 5.

The Press (Print Media) and Democratization in Nigeria

5.1. Five Typologies of Press and Democratization in Nigeria

Given the long history of state monopoly of broadcasting in Nigeria and its crass abuse by successive governments—military and civilian—sections of the print media have for decades provided whatever little space there is for critical public discourse. This is despite the sometimes vicious efforts by various regimes to muzzle the critical press as documented in the previous chapter. Nigeria unarguably has one of the most vibrant print media in Africa; a tradition that dates back to colonial times when leading nationalists initially established newspapers to challenge British colonialism. However, in about the two decades leading up to self-rule in 1960, the activist nationalist press metamorphosed into the party press which along with the fledgling state-owned (federal and regional) newspapers dominated the politics of Nigeria's first republic. Like the political parties of the first republic, the mix of party and government press was conceived primarily along ethnic lines with the practitioners often conflating partisan politics and journalism.

However, the military coups of 1966 which ended Nigeria's first republic and the subsequent civil war it engendered led to the prevalence of government newspapers as party politics was outlawed until 1979. The proliferation of state-owned newspapers during this period was also a consequence of the military governments' replacement of the three regional structure of the first republic with a 12 state system in 1967 and 19 states in 1976 with most of the new states establishing their own newspapers. Further, the unified command structure of the military in which state military governors were directly answerable to the military head of state fostered an authoritarian system that helped entrench a statist press tradition in the 1970s. Following 13 years of military rule, Nigeria returned to party politics in 1979 and with it a resurgence of brazen press partisanship as wealthy politicians established newspapers to further their political

interests and those of their parties. Similarly, parties in power at the federal and state levels also turned the state publications under their control to partisan political ends resulting in what Graham Mytton (1983: 123) called “fractured pluralism”.

Yet, in a rather paradoxical twist, it would seem that decades of press partisanship which arguably reached a nadir during Nigeria’s short-lived second republic (1979-1983) inspired new cultures of journalism from within the private sector that are not primarily beholden to some parochial ethnic or partisan political interests. Although the emergent privately-owned publications sometimes espoused slightly varying journalistic philosophies, most were established as self-sustaining businesses with the goal of appealing to the widest possible readership. Their emergence since the early 1980s also helped marginalize the once dominant government press most of which barely survived the late 1990s due to lack of public patronage and a very challenging economic climate. While a number of the non-state publications were established by wealthy entrepreneurs some of who had political ambitions in view of the transition to civil rule program the General Babangida administration initiated in 1987, others were founded by groups of practicing journalists and, in some cases, non-journalists with somewhat radical notions of journalism practice.

Indeed, questions like ‘who are journalists’ (see Weaver, 2005) and what constitutes journalism (see MacNair, 2005), have been debated for a long time as journalism hardly yields itself to a single definition. For example, in their review of earlier studies on who is a journalist, Peter Golding and Philip Elliott (1979: 193-4) identified two types of journalists—the ‘participant/advocate’ and the ‘neutral/gatekeeper’. While the former is “interventionist, socially committed and motivated”, the latter is “detached and uninvolved, concerned to preserve the objectivity and impartiality of journalism”. Another study by C. Argyris identified three job conceptions by journalists: “the traditional reporter, concerned only with objective facts”, “the reporter-researcher who wishes to provide interpretation” and “the reporter-activist, who sees journalism as a means to an end” (cited in Golding and Elliot, 1979: 194). This underscores the long standing global debate about the role of journalists either as “straight providers of information or as interpreters of this information...” (Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005: 70).

Beyond the typologies though is also the growing recognition that rather than a universal form, journalism is primarily a cultural phenomenon shaped substantially by the socioeconomic and political conditions of each locale of practice (Burgh, 2005).

Similarly, in a more expansive articulation inclusive of a wide range of media conventions and practices (mainstream and alternative) many of which were inspired or shaped by new communication technologies, Barbie Zelizer questioned the traditional and overly restrictive notion of journalism as an industry, profession, craft and institution and instead called for a cultural approach that not only “allows for the craft-oriented dimensions of practice, aspects of work that have little to do with the efficiency, profit or workability of the news industry” but also encourages attention to the viability and integrity of journalistic practice, where skills, ethics, beliefs, morality and principles come to the forefront of attention regardless of whether or not they have impact on the survival of either a specific news organization or the industry as a whole”. In its inclusiveness, “the culture of journalism” as she calls it bridges the centers with the margins, respects the validity of all types of news hard and soft, mainstream and alternative, and recognizes “journalism as a whole of disparate, changing, often self-contradictory impulses” replete with possibilities (Zelizer, 2005: 200-1).

As it were, a variety of journalism styles and practices have taken root in Nigeria since the early 1980s; the core period of democratization covered by this study. These include: (a) a withering government press tottering on the brink of extinction (b) a burgeoning liberal press that has become the benchmark for journalism practice (c) a feisty and immensely popular advocacy press that at times operated underground either due to proscriptions or threats from a repressive state (d) a tabloid press that goes beyond celebrity gossips to put a human face to public policies and (e) an activist citizen journalism operating mostly in the blogosphere. Each of the approaches will be discussed relative to democratization.

5.2. The Rise and Fall of the Government Press

As already mentioned in Chapter 1, the Nigerian federal government involvement in newspaper ownership dates back to 1961 (a year after independence) when it set up the Nigerian National Press Limited; a state-of-the-art printing facility to publish the *Morning Post* and the *Sunday Post*. Although the government cited concern over the technical edge and market dominance of the foreign owned press, particularly the International Publishing Corporation (IPC) (owners of the British Mirror newspaper chain) which bought the *Daily Times* in 1947 as reason for setting up the *Post*, the primary motive was political. It needed a national newspaper not just to promote itself but also to

counter the increasingly vituperative reporting of the regional government press and their affiliated party publications in the Eastern and Western regions where opposition parties were in power. Unfortunately, after a decade of struggle in which it failed to garner public patronage due largely to its rabid pro-government stance, the *Post* was shut down in 1973 leaving the federal government, albeit temporarily, without ownership of a newspaper.

Rather than resuscitate the *Post* as it had originally promised, the General Gowon administration decided to take over the influential *Daily Times* chain in line with its newly announced indigenization policy. Although the regime's move to acquire the 47.5 per cent controlling stake of the company from the International Publishing Corporation (IPC) of London was blocked by the Lagos Stock Exchange, the shares were subsequently sold to *Daily Times* staff and members of the public bringing to an end foreign participation in equity ownership of the company. But the government wouldn't be kept out for long as barely a month after the Gowon regime was toppled on July 29, 1975, the new regime of General Murtala Mohammed forcibly acquired 60 per cent controlling stake in the *Daily Times* through the wholly government owned National Insurance Corporation of Nigeria (NICON) which prior to the takeover controlled only 15% of the company's shares. Just about the same time, the military government also took over the *New Nigerian Newspapers* (the dominant newspaper in the northern region) which previously belonged to the Northern State governments. The double move effectively gave the federal government control over the two most influential newspaper chains in the country. Curiously, it was not until the eve of its handover of power to an elected civilian administration four years later that the regime regularized the acquisition of the *Daily Times* shares through Decree 101 of 1979 (Agbaje, 1992: 83, 233-4). The statist approach to the print media prevalent in the late 1960s through the 1970s was further reinforced by the enactment of the *Nigerian Enterprises Protection Decree of 1977* which barred foreigners from owning media companies in Nigeria with the exception of no more than 40 per cent stake in book publishing and pulp and paper milling. While the decree was geared towards indigenizing businesses in every sector, it particularly reinforced the dominance of the government press as foreign press barons were more likely to possess the technical skills and financial resources to establish successful newspapers capable of challenging the two influential publications that the government had taken over.

Mindful of both the *Post* debacle and public apprehension over its motive for taking over the *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian*, the General Obasanjo government promised to respect the editorial independence of both newspapers and, in the early going largely kept its word. That was not all together surprising as the regime was primarily a transitional one which seized power with a firm promise to return the country to democratic rule by 1979. Such commitment was underscored by the appointment of Dr. Patrick Dele Cole, a senior civil servant in the Cabinet Office who helped plan its transition to civil rule program as Managing Director of the *Daily Times*. Cole revitalized the paper by appointing Mr. Tony Momoh, a long-serving senior editorial staff who on several occasions felt bypassed on account of his ethnicity as editor of the daily. He also recruited from the United States two brilliant writers, Dr. Stanley Macebuh and Mr. Dele Giwa,⁹ as chair of editorial board and Features editor respectively. The merit based appointments along with the regime's non-interference in editorial matters ensured the *Daily Times* retained its pre-eminent status as Nigeria's largest and most influential newspaper in the immediate years following the takeover. On its part, the *New Nigerian* which was originally set up to champion core Northern interests largely remained true to that mission sometimes to the discomfort of its new owner—the federal government. The fact that senior northern military officers within the administration condoned the paper's long established pro-northern stance undermined any hope of turning it into a more federalist outfit (Agbaje, 1992: 258-260). Besides, both newspapers remained very influential due in part to the absence of any vibrant privately-owned national newspapers in the country at the time. Indeed by the mid to late 1970s, only four privately owned newspapers—the *Nigerian Tribune*, the *West African Pilot*, the *Daily Express* and the *Punch*—were still in existence. Of the first three which were closely associated with the political parties of the first republic, only the *Nigerian Tribune* remained somewhat healthy. Both the *West African Pilot* and the *Daily Express* endured hard times for much of the decade appearing sporadically and circulating very poorly until their eventual demise in the late 70s. The *Sunday Punch* which was founded in 1973 by James Olu Aboderin, a banker and Sam Amuka-Pemu, a seasoned journalist and former editor of the *Sunday Times* was conceived as a different kind of newspaper; an apolitical soft-sell

⁹ Macebuh went on to become the Managing Director of the influential *Guardian* newspaper which helped redefine Nigerian journalism. Giwa left *Daily Times* shortly for Concord Press where he edited *Sunday Concord* between 1980-1984 before co-founding *Newswatch* magazine as Editor-in-Chief until his death by a parcel bomb in 1986.

alternative to Nigeria's usually intensely polemical press. Its racy and light-hearted approach was underscored by liberal splashes of bikini clad girls; a tradition that continued after the paper went daily in 1976 (Agbaje, 1992: 261-2).

Expectedly, the political press which was largely dormant for much of the 1970s erupted with the return of party politics in Nigeria's short-lived second republic (1979-83) when brazen press partisanship became once again the norm. Not only did wealthy party members float newspapers to further their political interests and those of their parties but governments at both the federal and state levels also appropriated the state-owned publications under their control for partisan ends. That includes the two federal government-owned papers, the *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian*, which were turned into the official outlets of the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN). For example, shortly after coming to power, the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) controlled government replaced the Daily Times Board of directors with a new one stacked with party loyalists. And the new board in turn replaced top editorial staff of the paper whose loyalty to the party were in doubt with lackeys willing to tow the party line (Agbaje, 1992: 186-9).

Such brazen editorial interference became even worse under successive post second republic military regimes whose authoritarian and unscrupulous practices made them very unpopular. Saddled with the task of propping up such regimes, government newspapers since the early 1980s increasingly became irrelevant as evidenced in dwindling public patronage and loss of market share. Their precarious situation was further aggravated by the economic crises of the 1980s brought about by the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) which pauperized much of the citizenry making newspapers unaffordable for many. Another key reason for the steady decline and in some cases demise of the government press was the emergence, since the early 1980s, of a strong corps of privately-owned liberal newspapers set up primarily as self-sustaining commercial ventures with broad market appeal. The liberal press tradition which will be discussed in the next section offered something refreshingly different from the parochialism and blatant partisanship of both the government and the party-owned or affiliated newspapers which had dominated public discourse since the years leading up to independence.

Since the *Daily Times* and the *New Nigerian* are the only national and unarguably most influential government newspapers in Nigeria, it is necessary at this point to look more closely at some of their travails since the 1980s. Their slide which was

decades in the making became precipitous since the early 1990s when they first went into a tailspin appearing intermittently and ultimately closing shop for extended periods of time. As already observed, the civilian government of the second republic (1979-83) set the stage for the politicization of both newspapers, a tradition successive military regimes enthusiastically embraced such that by the early 1990s, the culture of government interference in their editorial decisions had become firmly entrenched. For example, in 1989, Mohamed Haruna, a well respected journalist was sacked as the Managing Director/Editor-in-Chief of the *New Nigerian* over the paper's editorial criticizing the General Babangida administration for pressuring kingmakers to adopt Ibrahim Dasuki as the 13th Sultan of the powerful Sokoto Caliphate. Prior to his removal as editor-in-chief, Haruna had been detained for a week over an advertisement placed in the paper by a prominent Islamic Organization, Jamatru Nasril Islam, that was critical of government. He was replaced by a known military apologist Mallam Sid Ali Sirajo who became the company's "Sole Administrator". A similar situation unfolded at the *Daily Times* in December 1991 when the Managing Director Dr. Yemi Ogunbiyi was replaced by Mr. Tola Adeniyi, another known apologist of the General Babangida administration who was also designated 'Sole Administrator' (Olukotun, 2004: 37-8). The era of "Sole Administrators" with seemingly unlimited powers marked the tightening of the federal government's stranglehold on both newspapers at a time when the populace was growing increasingly restive about the regime's political and economic programs.

In one of the more egregious cases of government interference in editorial matters, Mr. Yakubu Abdulazeez, editor of the *New Nigerian* resigned in protest over a 'mysterious' editorial in the June 16, 1993 edition of the paper calling for the annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election and urging General Babangida to continue in office. The editorial allegedly was faxed in from the Presidency and not surprisingly, the election was voided a little over a week later triggering a massive political crises (see Chapter 2) (Olukotun, 2004: 54). Such editorial interference grew even worse under the General Abacha regime which seized power amidst the political crises. Along with increased self-censorship, government newspapers were literally barred from publishing anything even remotely critical of the regime. In August 1995, Tunji Oseni, a well regarded journalist who had been the Managing Director and Editor-in-chief of the *Daily Times* since 1993 was fired after receiving four cautions from then Information Minister Dr. Walter Ofonagoro. The last straw apparently was his refusal to publish a pro-

government editorial faxed to him by the minister about former U.S. President Jimmy Carter's visit to Nigeria. Carter had during the visit questioned both the regime's human rights record and the credibility of its transition to civil rule program but the faxed editorial sought to cast his comments in more positive light. The official word though, was that the editor-in-chief was sacked to facilitate the restructuring of the company (Olukotun, 2004: 67-8).

Indeed, by the mid-1990s, both the *New Nigerian* and the *Daily Times* were in a freefall and needed serious restructuring but certainly not from the government whose brazen interference in editorial matters helped create the mess in the first place. The very precarious financial situation of the government newspapers was not helped by their having to compete for an ever shrinking market with centrist liberal (privately-owned) newspapers on the one side and a number of feisty and popular advocacy publications on the other. The fact that the state also controlled broadcasting which, by far is a more popular medium given the high level of illiteracy, meant it can only go so far in propping up newspapers that have lost traction with the public. By the mid 1990s, both the *New Nigerian* and the *Daily Times* were literally on life support. In an effort to stay afloat, the *New Nigerian* closed its southern offices for two years and suspended publication for several weeks. It however got a temporary reprieve in February 1995 when the head of state General Abacha bailed it out after appointing his close friend Dr. Abdulrasheed Abubakar as Managing Director (Olukotun, 2004: 31). By 1997, the equally struggling *Daily Times* had laid-off over half of its staff and rested several previously popular titles on its stable. The company's dire situation in the mid-1990s was underscored by the circulation figures of its leading title, the *Daily Times*, which dropped to as low as 14,000 from a respectable 100,000 in 1991¹⁰ (Olukotun, 2004: 28, 68). Although the dire economic situation since the late 1980s severely affected the entire

¹⁰ In the early to mid 1970s, the *Sunday Times* had a print-run of well over 600,000 and the *Daily Times* 450,000. Between 1976-1980, the *Daily Times* and the *Sunday Times* were circulating around 350,000 and 500,000 respectively (Momoh, 2004). In the early 1990's *Weekend Concord* circulated as much as 500,000 copies a day. *The Sun* which unarguably is the highest circulating paper since its launch in 2003 claims a figure of 120,000 a day (Igwe, 2004), but industry watchers dispute that putting its circulation to somewhere between 80,000-100,000. Since the the Audit Bureau of Circulation was disbanded in the 1980s, there are no credible independent sales figures other than what each newspaper puts out which is often grossly inflated to attract advertisers. But so bad is the economic downturn that since the late-1990s, the leading national newspapers don't do more than 50,000 daily. It is estimated that all the papers in Nigeria combined do not exceed 500,000 copies daily.

publishing industry, government newspapers at both the federal and state levels fared the worst. For example, so dire was the situation for most government newspapers at the state level that they published only on special occasions such as the anniversary of the state courtesy of special grants from the governor.

Barely surviving, state-owned newspapers at all levels were largely peripheral players in shaping the public discourse leading to the end of military rule in 1999. And they have not fared much better in the post-military era. Following decades of struggle during which it ceased publication numerous times, the *New Nigerian* in 2003 was reacquired by its original owners—the governments of the Northern states who have so far managed to keep it in business. The fact that the paper has historically championed the cause of the entire northern region may help to bolster its editorial independence as no single governor can unilaterally turn it into its personal mouthpiece. Besides, the paper now publishes two completely different editions; one for the North and the other for the rest of the country. How much longer it survives under the current ownership remains to be seen as it has yet to deal with any potentially divisive issues that could pit some northern states against the others. By and large, the *New Nigerian* has regressed to its roots as a regional publication rather than a national newspaper the federal government envisaged when it acquired the paper in 1975.

In contrast, the Daily Times of Nigeria (DTN) which was slated for privatization following the end of military rule remains in limbo mired in controversies, scandals and litigations. In August 2004, the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) announced the sale of the company to Folio Communications Limited; a little known if not shadowy firm with zero experience in the media business. Folio Communications is primarily owned by three brothers, Fidelis, Charles and Noel Anosike, who shot to national limelight solely on the back of the controversial transaction. Other competitive bids including one backed by past and present staff of the *Daily Times* were rejected. Folio's winning bid of N1.25 billion Naira gave it control of 95.5% equity stake in the company. The entire process was roundly denounced for lack of transparency and for being rigged in favor of Folio; charges that have been validated by developments since the sale was concluded. For example, shortly after it won the bid, the directors of Folio became embroiled in a very acrimonious public dispute over the ownership of the company; a matter that purportedly was 'resolved' out of court following weeks of litigation. Then it emerged that Folio had defaulted on the bank loan it took out to finance the deal forcing the *Daily Times* into a

court appointed receivership in March 2005. Folio Communications had borrowed N750, 000, 000 million from Hallmark Bank (now in liquidation) to finance the deal with the balance of N500, 000, 000 million coming from DSV Limited for about 40% minority stake in the company. The receivership ended in March 2007 but despite repeated pledges by Folio to invest in among other things digitalized infrastructure required to return the paper to its once pre-eminent status in the industry, the *Daily Times* has yet to resume publication well over six years after it was 'privatized'. Although the paper appeared for a while between 2006 and 2007 to cover the 2007 election campaigns, most of the journalists who worked for the company during the period are still owed several months' salaries.

And the controversies show no sign of abating as Folio became embroiled in fresh litigation over the acquisition and a criminal investigation for alleged manipulation of the company's most treasured assets. For example, on January 30, 2010, a federal court nullified the sale of the company to Folio on the ground that Folio never actually paid for the *Daily Times* shares but instead dubiously used the company's assets as security for the loan it used to finance the deal. In a suit filed by minority shareholding firm, D.S.V. Limited, the judge found that the money Folio purportedly paid for the acquisition of the company in effect came from the *Daily Times* itself. Folio has appealed the decision alleging among other things bias on the part of the trial judge. Folio is also suing DSV Limited alleging a host of contract breaches and for issuing it with numerous dud checks. In yet another lawsuit, the influential Lagos State Chapter of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) is seeking a court order to compel the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) to rescind the sale of the company to Folio on the ground that it misrepresented itself in the course of the transaction. Folio's legion of critics argue that the company was never genuinely interested in journalism or newspaper publishing but instead in bilking the *Daily Times* of its most valued assets. They point to the alleged sale of the company's land at Warehouse Road (Apapa-Lagos) to a bank, the lease of its Journalism Institute to a mega-church and the disposal of the company's web-offset press as scrap without purchasing a new press as examples of Folio's dubious asset-stripping practices. Other prime assets of the company that Folio has allegedly disposed of include the landmark Nigerian Stock Exchange Building in Lagos and the U.K. office building at Cold Harbour Lane, London. Unfazed by the seemingly endless controversies and litigations, Folio's chairman Fidelis Anosike remained confident about the future

promising to re-launch the *Daily Times* and *Business Times*—two of its leading titles—by June 2010 to coincide with the 85th anniversary of the company (Maduabuchi, Emma, 2010). The privatization debacle of the Daily Times of Nigeria not only marks the end of government ownership of a major national newspaper but also draws the curtain on the era of state press that became entrenched in the mid-1970s. Given the seemingly unending crises over its privatization and the apparent stripping of its most valued landed assets by the new owners, it remains to be seen if a privatized *Daily Times* will ever regain its pre-eminent place in Nigeria's newspaper industry.

5.3. Democratization and the Bourgeoning of the Liberal Press

If the Nigerian newspaper industry since the late colonial period was dominated by a combination of government newspapers and the party-owned or affiliated press most of which were notorious for their partisanship, the period from the early 1980s marked the emergence of privately-owned liberal press established primarily as self-sustaining commercial interests, with the goal of appealing to the widest possible readership. The aspiration was to be seen as truly national publications both in circulation and appeal. This meant eschewing as much as possible the parochialism and partisanship of the government and the party press in favor of a new journalism ethic reflecting more or less the ideals of objectivity and balance. Ironically, the emergence of the liberal press was, to some degree, a consequence of the partisan media gridlock that dogged Nigeria's short-lived second republic (1979-1983).

The return of party politics in 1979 following 13 years of military rule marked a resurgence of the party press with wealthy politicians establishing newspapers primarily to further their own interests and those of their political parties. Similarly, parties in power both at the federal and state levels appropriated government newspapers under their control for partisan ends and in some of the states where no papers previously existed, new ones were hurriedly set-up. Most of the newspapers established by party bigwigs during the second republic were primarily used to wage local political battles and often never circulated beyond their states of origin (see Agbaje, 1992: 186-193, 195). One notable exception however was the Concord Press which along with the previously apolitical *Punch*, were about the two most prominent privately-owned national newspapers at the time. Concord Press of Nigeria (CPN) was launched on March 1, 1980 by Chief M.K.O. Abiola, a billionaire businessman and chieftain of the ruling

National Party of Nigeria (NPN). As a Yoruba from the South-West where the opposition Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) and its affiliated press held sway, he felt the need to establish a newspaper to advance both his political interests and those of the ruling NPN which was viewed in the region largely as a Northern Hausa-Fulani ethnic party. Typical of a party-affiliated press, Concord, at conception was primarily a political project and only secondarily a commercial or journalistic venture. Despite the paper's obvious partisan political agenda, it was still able to recruit many seasoned journalists due in part to generous remuneration and other perks. The deep pockets of the publisher also ensured it was able to set up a state of the art printing facility leading to a simultaneous launch of both the daily (*National Concord*) and weekly (*Sunday Concord*) editions. However, in July 1982, Chief Abiola resigned from the NPN in very acrimonious circumstances after a failed bid to wrest the party's presidential ticket from the incumbent Alhaji Shehu Shagari who wanted a second term.

Following his resignation, Concord Press instantly turned against the NPN led federal government, a belligerence that resulted in the harassment, intimidation and in some cases detention of its top editorial staff (see Chapter 1). A mysterious fire in February 1983 also gutted a part of the company's premises destroying over 7,000 reels of newsprint worth several years of production (Agbaje, 1992:176-184). The *Punch* which earned its early reputation as an apolitical soft-sell also became embroiled in the charged partisanship of second republic politics. A bitter and very public feud between the publisher/majority shareholder Chief Olu Aboderin and his minority partner Mr. Sam Amuka-Pemu which was part business (unpaid loans) and part political (support for different second republic political parties) saw the former buy out the latter in 1982. While Amuka-Pemu had sympathy for the ruling National Party of Nigeria (NPN), Aboderin favored the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) the dominant party in his native South-West (Yoruba) region. Aside from the leader of the UPN Chief Obafemi Awolowo being his mentor, Aboderin also had issues with the economic policies of the ruling NPN, in particular the much maligned import licensing regime that often privileged party loyalists over genuine entrepreneurs. Under the policy, newspapers critical of the federal government were denied import licenses for newsprint and other printing materials essential to their survival. Aboderin was also ticked by what he saw as NPN's pro-North bias in appointments to key federal ministries/agencies and other government controlled corporations like banks. After buying out his minority partner (Amuka-Pemu) in 1982,

Aboderin decidedly turned the *Punch* against the ruling NPN and found an ally in Chief Abiola, the Concord Publisher whose bitterness against his former party had become even stronger. Both publishers were united in a common cause—to use their newspapers to engineer the defeat of the NPN in the 1983 general elections. When that failed due primarily to blatant rigging of the elections by the NPN, the duo encouraged the military takeover which on December 31, 1983 ended Nigeria's second republic (Agbaje, 1992: 182-86). So intense was the fractionalization of the second republic press along partisan political lines that it led to a split in the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) for much of the period (Agbaje, 1992: 192).

Paradoxically, it was the long tradition of press partisanship which reached a nadir during the short-lived second republic that helped inspire a new corps of privately-owned, non-party affiliated newspapers founded on the liberal social responsibility ideals of neutrality and balance. If the party-owned or affiliated press were primarily a political project and only secondarily a commercial and journalistic venture the emergent liberal press of the early 1980s were largely the opposite. The Guardian Press Limited which first launched as a weekly on February 27, 1983 (it went daily on July 4, 1983) blazed the trail in this regard. Founded by Alex Ibru, the youngest of the wealthy and influential Ibru brothers from the minority Urohbo tribe of the South-South region, the *Guardian* recruited some of the brightest newspaper minds available as it sought to cast itself as a credible and different kind of newspaper committed to a fair and balanced coverage of the political spectrum with an elegant presentational style to boot. At the core of the management team were seasoned media men and personal friends of Ibru, Dr. Dele Cole, Dr. Stanley Macebuh, Mr. Pius Ayan, and Dr. Yemi Ogunbiyi, who all left the *Daily Times* due to growing government interference in editorial matters. The flag editorial in the maiden edition summed up the paper's mission:

The Guardian is an independent newspaper, established for the purpose of presenting balanced coverage of events, and of promoting the best interests of Nigeria. It owes allegiance to no political party, ethnic community, religious or other interest group. Its primary commitment is to the integrity and sovereignty of the Federation of Nigeria... The Guardian is a liberal newspaper, committed to the best tradition and ideals of republican democracy. It believes that it is the responsibility of the state not only to protect and defend the citizen, but also to create the conditions, political, social, economic and cultural, in which all citizens may achieve their highest potentials as human beings. The Guardian does not, in principle, object to the ideology of free enterprise,... but it believes that the state must intervene judiciously in the economic life of

the nation, in order to minimize the adverse effects of free enterprise and ensure that less privileged citizens have reasonable and fair access to the basic necessities of life. The *Guardian* will at all times uphold the need for justice, probity in public life, equal access to the nation's resources, and equal protection under the laws of Nigeria for all citizens..."

(cited in Agbaje, 1992: 194)

While many newspapers had in the past expressed similar non-partisan editorial position, they often end up pandering to some parochial interests to follow through on that promise. The *Guardian* was thus a breath of fresh air in the hyper-partisan media environment of Nigeria's second republic. Its success was instant as it became financially self-sustaining in a matter of months (Agbaje, 1992: 194). However, the paper's policy heavy focus and intellectual style appealed primarily to an urbane middle to upper class readership earning it the reputation of an elitist publication or as it prides itself "the flagship of the Nigerian Press".

The success of the *Guardian* along with the military coup of December 31, 1983 encouraged the emergence of other privately owned liberal publications of the early 1980s. For one, the coup ended the very toxic environment of second republic politics causing most of the smaller party owned or affiliated newspapers to fade away. The more established ones like *Concord*, *Punch* (both of which were very critical of the National Party of Nigeria (NPN) led civilian government and actively encouraged the coup) and the *Tribune* (owned by the leader of the Unity Party of Nigeria (UPN) Chief Awolowo) tweaked their editorial stance to reflect the new political reality of military rule. The second major privately-owned newspaper to emerge in this period was *Vanguard* established in 1984 by Sam Amuka, the co-founder and former minority owner of the *Punch*. *Vanguard* was in part conceived as a light-hearted alternative to the intellectually minded the *Guardian*. Other privately-owned newspapers with varying degrees of success also came into being in the mid to late 1980s; some of them driven by the political transition program launched by the General Babangida administration in 1987. Among the better known titles are *The Mail* (owned by Clarkson Majomi a Public Relations Expert and businessman from a Southern minority ethnic group), *The Republic* (established by Chief Ajayi, a Yoruba businessman and banker), *The Reporter* (published by General Shehu Yar'dua -a Northern Hausa-Fulani power broker and second in command in the General Obasanjo-led military regime of 1976-79) and *The Champion* (owned by Chief Emmanuel Iwuanyanwu—a millionaire businessman of Igbo

ethnic stock). With the exception of *The Champion* which exists till today, the other three titles only survived for a few years.

Equally significant during the 1980s was the emergence of privately-owned weekly newsmagazines many of which were loosely modeled after the iconic *Time*. The first and arguably most influential in this category was *Newswatch* which became famous for its hardnosed investigative reporting and elegant prose style. *Newswatch* was founded in 1984 by four topflight editors from various geographic regions of the country: Dele Giwa (assassinated by a parcel bomb in 1986), Ray Ekpu, Yakubu Mohammed (all three formerly with *Concord* press) and Dan Agbese (who previously edited the *New Nigerian*). Another influential privately-owned news magazine of the 1980s was *Thisweek*, a glossy weekly founded by Nduka Obaigbena, a fledgling publisher from the Southern minority region. Big publishing stables like the *Concord* and the *Guardian* also entered the growing weekly newsmagazine market with *African Concord* and *African Guardian* respectively. The mid to late 1980s also saw the rise of popular gossip magazines that focused on the salacious and tawdry private lives of public figures. Some of the leading titles of that genre which was contemptuously labeled 'junk journalism' by the elite include *Prime People*, *Vintage People*, *Classique*, *Quality* (published by *Newswatch*), *City People* and *Today's Choice*. These will be broached later in this chapter under the tabloid press tradition.

The trend of privately-owned liberal press continued well into the 1990s driven in part by the seemingly interminable transition to civil rule program which began afresh under a new military regime following the annulment of the 1993 presidential elections. The dramatic increase in the number of such publications was also a consequence of a bubble economy fostered by the IMF/World Bank mandated Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) which among other things created a corrupt plutocratic order of mostly currency speculators masquerading as bankers. Although SAP failed miserably in kick-starting the economy as promised, it turned out a boon to the political and economic elite who exploited the system to no end. The inevitable bust that followed resulted in galloping inflation, low capacity utilization (particularly in the industrial sector), diminishing external reserves, ballooning external debt stock, record unemployment among other severe economic problems that decimated the middle class and further pauperized the masses (Olukotun, 2004: 24-5, Bourgault, 1998: 83-4).

Despite the dire economic environment which has led to high mortality rates in the print media sector, a number of major liberal national dailies have hit the market since the 1990s. They include: *Thisday* (founded in 1995 by Nduka Obaigbena, the publisher of the now defunct *Thisweek* magazine), *The Post Express* (established in 1996 by billionaire entrepreneur Sunny Odogwu), *The Trust* (founded in 1997 by the former owners of the now defunct *Citizen Magazine*) and the *Independent* (originally established in 1997 as the *Diet* by James Ibori—an unscrupulous politician and chieftain of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party under which he became a state governor). The *Diet* which had taken a hit with the reading public on account of its partisanship took a hiatus and was repackaged in 2002 as the *Independent*). Other major privately-owned national newspapers to be established since the end of military rule in 1999 include *New Age*, *Leadership*, *National Daily* and *Next* (founded by Dele Olojede the Nigerian born 2005 Pulitzer prize winning reporter for the New York based *Newsday*). There is also the popular soft-sell, *The Sun*, which will be discussed in a separate section of this chapter under the tabloid press tradition.

Several influential weekly news magazines also came on the scene in the 1990s. These include *Tell* (1991), *The News* (1993), *The Sunday Magazine (TSM)*, 1993) and *The Source* (1997). The magazines which were mostly established by groups of journalists espoused a more adversarial if not militant brand of journalism primarily in response to the escalated military repression of the 1990s. This radical tradition of 'advocacy' journalism arguably best exemplified by *Tell* and *The News* will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

While there are currently over twenty privately owned newspapers in Nigeria (national, regional and local), most have struggled to stay afloat due to the perennially depressed economy and have little influence nationally. However, such leading national newspapers like the *Guardian*, *Vanguard*, *Punch*, *Tribune*, *Champion*, *This day*, *Trust*, and *Independent* which have survived for some years along with relative new titles like *Next* arguably best represent the liberal press tradition. As already observed, these were primarily established as self-sustaining commercial ventures and only secondarily as political projects driven by the parochial interests of the publishers and their pre-eminence since the 1990s contributed in no small measure to the marginalization of the once dominant government and party press. Interestingly, the publishers (particularly since the 1990s) also come from virtually all geographic regions of the country with

southern minorities owning four of the most influential newspapers: the *Guardian* (Alex Ibru), *Vanguard* (Sam Amuka-Pemu), *Thisday* (Nduka Obaigbena) and *Independent* (James Ibori).

It however needs stressing that the pre-eminence of the liberal press since the 1990s does not suggest the complete absence of bias or unfettered editorial independence. As with the liberal press tradition everywhere including in the most advanced democracies, proprietary interests play a key role in influencing the editorial biases of newspapers. Perhaps, the key difference between the state/party press of the previous decades and the emergent liberal press of the 1990s is the degree of partisanship with the latter clearly more conscious of its credibility with the reading public whose patronage is crucial for its survival. In the face of a shrinking and increasingly competitive market brought about by the perennially depressed economy, many of the papers had to shed ethnic or other parochial labels that could undermine their broader national appeal. Not only are the editorial biases of the liberal press less brazen in comparison with the party and government press, the varied ethnic backgrounds and sometimes conflicting political and economic interests of the publishers also ensured, even if unwittingly, some degree of pluralism.

As part of the nation's power elites, the publishers often had to strike a tricky balance between retaining the trust of the reading public made up mostly of an ever shrinking middle class with declining purchasing power and maintaining a decent relationship with unsavory governments which also happen to be the major dispenser of political and economic patronage. Decades of maladministration, rights violations and endemic corruption by successive regimes—military and civilian alike—have left impoverished Nigerians very distrustful of government and the closer a media outlet is perceived to be to government the more unpopular it is with the public. As discussed in the previous section, intense public apathy was a major factor in the decline of state-owned newspapers since the 1980s and the emergent liberal press understandably became wary of identifying too closely with government, political parties or some parochial interests. Yet the government remains a major source of income for the media by way of subscription by its various agencies (in the case of the print media) along with massive advertising buys to promote their policies and programs. Such government patronage is usually extended to major privately-owned publications as a goodwill act to

elicit favorable coverage from them. The challenge is to avail themselves of such vital resource without being perceived to be too close to the government.

In eschewing the brazen partisanship of the party and government press, the emergent liberal press more or less sought to cast itself as an arbiter of sorts between various stakeholders in the democratization process. This meant a greater commitment to the journalistic ethos of professionalization which in practical terms, is often tied to the pervasive yet slippery notion of ‘objectivity’.¹¹ Although sometimes cast in such canonical terms like “the moral artillery” of the liberal Western press and the “Holy Grail” of journalism (Altschull, 1984: 126, 130), objectivity remains an intensely contested if not illusory idea both in terms of its exact meaning and the possibility of its actualization (see Hackett and Zhao, 1997). For instance, Peter Golding and Philip Elliott (1978: 207-8) make a distinction between ‘impartiality’—“a disinterested approach to news, lacking in motivation to shape or select material according to a particular view or opinion” and ‘objectivity’—“a complete and unrefracted capture of the world” arguing that a journalist can be impartial to the materials yet fail to achieve objectivity because of the inherent limitations in news gathering and processing. They then went on identify three possible approaches to journalistic objectivity and impartiality. First is the mainstream ‘professional’ view that it is possible to be objective and impartial as both are “attitudes of the mind”. The second approach views objectivity as something desirable which journalists must strive towards even if it is ultimately a “nebulous and unattainable ideal”. The third viewpoint dismisses notions of impartiality and objectivity as impossible and thus unnecessary due primarily to the nature of the media industry, the rules and conventions that govern news production as well as the social values that shape them. This viewpoint recognizes that far from being innocuous, news values and frames are socially constructed and reflective of ideological biases—economic, political, cultural and more (see Allan 2004, Brian McNair 2005, 31-5). This includes what Stuart Allan (73-4) calls “the will to facticity” —a range of strategies journalists use to dress their accounts as facts such as how they frame questions and their privileging of certain sources and viewpoints over the others (Allan, 2004: 73-4). Thus “while journalists typically present a news account as an ‘objective’, ‘impartial’ *translation* of reality, it may instead be

¹¹ For detailed discussion of the evolution of journalism as a profession and debates around it see (Schudson, 1978, Chalaby 1998, Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005, MacNair, 2005).

understood to be providing an ideological *construction* of contending truth-claims about reality. This is to suggest that the news account, far from simply ‘reflecting’ the reality of an event, is effectively providing a codified definition of what should count as the reality of the event” (Allan, 2004: 4, *italics his*). Even as the consensus among mainstream journalists have largely coalesced around the view of objectivity as “an aspiration, a never-quite-achievable searching after the closest possible approximation to the truth” (McNair, 2005: 32), its requirement of journalists to clearly separate facts/news from opinion/commentary is also problematic. As Richard Keeble has argued:

...mainstream journalists’ stubborn commitment to objectivity and the belief that ‘fact’ can be separated from ‘comment’ not only flies in the face of the postmodernist critique of the Enlightenment dualities—which prioritized the intellect over emotion, mind over body, head over heart, the objective over the subjective; by suggesting that the pursuit of information can be value-free, the ideology of objectivity also serves to marginalize the ethical and political dimensions within the dominant journalistic culture.

(Keeble, 2005: 57)

It would appear though that the traditional line between news and opinion, reportage and commentary has increasingly become blurred in what McNair (2005: 37) calls “commentary explosion”. Perhaps mindful of the never ending controversy over ‘objectivity’, and its associated terms of ‘neutrality’ and ‘impartiality’, some have over the years proposed replacing them with supposedly less problematic terms like ‘fairness’, ‘balance’ and ‘truthfulness’ (Chabal, 1998: 133, Altschull, 1984: 128-9). Whichever terms one favors in the discourse of objectivity, its application in practical terms is usually articulated in some form of codes of practice. The first journalists’ code of practice was adopted in 1922 by The American Society of Newspaper Editors (ASNE), an organization founded by editors of daily newspapers in the U.S. That opened the floodgates for several others to follow, at first in the U.S., Britain and other western countries and much later, in other parts of the world, in what became an almost global drive towards the ‘professionalization’ of journalism. Overtime, the adoption of codes of practice spurred the need for some standard education and training for journalists (as is common with more traditional professions like medicine and law) to enable them discharge their duties effectively (see Tumber and Prentoulis, 2005: 65-66).

As a former British colony, the Nigerian press was not immune to these developments as the first of its four codes of practice to-date go back to 1955 when the

country was still under colonial rule. The initial code which was adopted by the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) was followed by a second one in 1962 courtesy of the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE). In 1979, the third code—a merger of the earlier two—was adopted by the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) comprising the Newspaper Proprietors Association of Nigeria (NPAN), the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) and the Nigerian Guild of Editors (NGE). That was the subsisting code when the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) was inaugurated courtesy of Decree No. 85 of 1992. However, given the lack of clarity of the 1979 code on many issues relating to journalism practice, the Nigerian Press Organization (NPO) in partnership with the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) developed a new code in 1996 which was ratified in 1998. In the foreword to the new document titled “Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists”, then Chairman of the Press Council, Alade Adunewu noted among other things that “an ethical code is without doubt a sine qua non in any profession. Journalism today faces an increasing need for critical reporting, accuracy, fairness and objectivity”. Without the benefit of elaboration, it would seem that mentioning ‘critical reporting’ and ‘objectivity’ in the same breathe is contradictory. Divided into 15 sections that cover such broad issues like—“Editorial Independence”; “Accuracy and Fairness”; “Privacy”; “Privilege/Non-Disclosure”; “Decency”; “Discrimination”; “Reward and Gratification”; “Violence”; “Children and Minors”; “Access to Information”; “Public Interest”; “Social Responsibility”; “Plagiarism”; “Press Freedom and Responsibility”, and Copyright”—the code, for the most part, looks innocuous more so as it avoided the term ‘objectivity’. However, the “*Preamble*” notes that “truth is the cornerstone of journalism and every journalist should strive diligently to ascertain the truth of every event”. Further, Section 2 dealing with “*Accuracy and Fairness*” states that “factual accurate, balanced and fair reporting is the ultimate objective of good journalism and the basis of earning public trust and confidence” and “in the course of his duties, a journalist should strive to separate facts from conjecture and comment” (Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists, 1998). The code which by and large naturalized the ideals of objectivity even if it did not expressly use the word reflected closely the practices of the major liberal newspapers since the early 1990s; a period during which emergent advocacy publications, some of which openly repudiated the notion of objectivity, were routinely criticized by liberal press colleagues as ‘unprofessional’. However, the continuing decade long boycott of the press council by the NUJ, NGE and the NPAN over the controversial 1999 amendment to the law

establishing it (see Chapter 3) meant the new code of practice has yet to be subjected to the council's adjudicatory mechanism.

Beside the code of practice a second major element of 'professionalization' involves the education and training of journalists to enable them perform their duties effectively. Decree 85 of 1992 which established the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) vested on it the power to accredit all journalism training programs in the country as well as the certification of foreign journalism credentials. At present, about 40 universities, 18 Polytechnics and 7 institutes have had their journalism or Mass Communication programs approved by the Council (Nigerian Press Council, 2010). In lieu of educational training in a council approved institution, five years experience as a journalist (prior to 1992 when the decree was enacted) also made one eligible to practice as a journalist. Pursuant to these goals, the NPC decree vested on the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) the power to register journalists. The NUJ had insisted on the registration powers as a condition to support the legislation worrying that the responsibility, if in the wrong hands, could foster censorship. However, upon registration, the NUJ is required to transfer the register to the secretary of the Press Council whose duty it is to maintain it. According to Section 17(2) of the Decree, in addition to educational training or professional experience, an applicant for registration as a journalist must be of good character, has attained 18 years of age; has not been convicted of an offence involving fraud or dishonesty among others (Nigerian Press Council, 1999).

Prior to the inauguration of the Press Council in 1992, issues relating to 'professionalization' were not a priority for the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) which was primarily a labor union and social club of sorts. There was for instance, no accreditation of journalists or entry requirements into the profession beyond being employed in the editorial/news department of a media company. There was also no mechanism for or interest in enforcing the existing ethical codes of practice. As already discussed, for much of the decades leading up to the 1980s the vast majority of journalists worked for very partisan media organizations; mostly the party and the government press. The pervasive and sometimes charged partisan media environment under which the journalists operated even led to a brief break-up of the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) into two factions during the short-lived second republic (1979-1983). Many pre-1980s journalists either completely grew on the job or had little formal training which often comprised basic skills courses in places like the Nigerian Institute of

Journalism (NIJ) and the Times Journalism Institute (TJI) both in Lagos. However, much of that started to change with the emergence of the liberal press in the 1980s in particular, the launching of the *Guardian* in 1983. The newspaper's disposition to rigorous, policy oriented journalism helped open the profession to an influx of university and polytechnic trained graduates many with degrees or very advanced diplomas in Mass Communication, the Humanities and Social Sciences. The trend boosted the editorial quality of the emergent liberal press both in terms of substance and style. For instance, the new entrants into the profession not only had a deeper theoretical understanding of the issues they covered (relative to their less educated predecessors) but also the stylistic ability to present them in more elegant prose.

The rise of other liberal newspapers following the *Guardian* meant tougher competition both for readership and the best talents. This also led to slightly better remuneration for journalists (relative to what previously existed in the industry, but not remotely close to more lucrative private sector jobs like banks and oil companies) and helped enhance their social status. Given the domination of the government press in the 1970s during which the most influential privately owned publication, the *Daily Times*, was taken over by the state and the brazen media partisanship that helped ruin the short-lived second republic (1979-1983), the rise of the liberal press in the 1980s marked a renaissance of sorts for the print media. With government newspapers moribund and the party press extinct; the liberal press became the dominant press form and arguably the benchmark for journalism practice. It's primarily commercialist philosophy meant that proprietors' and other parochial influences became increasingly muted in the effort to appeal to the widest possible readership across ethnic and geographic regions in order to be accepted as truly national publications. Besides, the perennial culture of bad governance in Nigeria; especially the widespread poverty which pervasive corruption at all levels of government fostered caused the leading liberal press to naturally identify with the 'watchdog' role of holding the government accountable to the people. Major liberal newspapers like the *Guardian* however approached that surveillance role with some degree of circumspection reflective of the ethos of balance, fairness and in particular the separation of news reportage from editorial commentary/opinion. The standard format for virtually all the liberal newspapers is to feature the major news of the day as determined by their 'gatekeepers', on the front page with the rest spread out in the designated news pages inside the newspaper. Similarly, editorial commentaries and

other opinion pieces are restricted to a designated 'op-ed' page inside the newspaper although the commentaries are occasionally moved to the front page to give them prominence. It needs pointing out though that despite their clear identification with the watchdog role, the Nigerian liberal press has, for some inexplicable reason, often shied away from muckraking ceding that brand of journalism (as we shall see shortly) to the more combative weekly newsmagazines. In essence, their news reportage is typically routine and less controversial reflecting as it were the official position either by itself or along with other critical viewpoints on any given issue. It is however their sometimes scathing editorial commentaries and opinion pieces about government policies and programs or the conduct of some of officials that have got them into trouble with state authorities especially under military rule (see Chapter 2).

While the preeminence of the liberal press tradition since the 1980s is hardly in question, its 'objectivity' inspired brand of journalism remain contested by proponents of the advocacy press. Within the liberal press ranks, newspapers like the *Guardian*, *Thisday* and *Punch* are arguably the most influential, especially among elites and policy makers who make up the majority of the print media audience. Any serious person with something serious to say will probably go to any of those three newspapers first. However, with the larger public, the advocacy press (especially during the years of military rule) and the tabloid press remain most popular.

5.4. Enter the Gadflies: The Advocacy Press and Political Transition

If the government-owned press discussed earlier are 'lapdogs' content to do their masters bidding and the liberal press 'watchdogs' in the classic 'fourth estate' sense of the term, the advocacy press that emerged in the early 1990s could well be described as 'attack dogs' given their rather combative philosophy of journalism. An unwitting product of military despotism, they embodied the intensely adversarial political climate of the time by taking an unequivocal stance against a praetorian state. And in the absence of a formal opposition to military rule, the fledgling advocacy press literally constituted itself into one by closely aligning with pro-democracy forces and other critical segments of civil society. It sought, as one of its key practitioners Dapo Olorunyomi explains, to challenge the military's sense of its own 'presumptive legitimacy' with a 'presumptive parliament' of journalism" (Olorunyomi, 1999: 234). Feisty, obstreperous, recalcitrant, irreverent and for

the most part irrepressible, it repudiated the liberal press ethos of dispassionate factual reportage in favor of an interpretive polemical approach that liberally mixes news with commentary. And for much of the 1990s, its practitioners largely operated underground either due to formal proscriptions or as a safety measure to elude state security operatives in what became commonly known as 'guerilla journalism'.

In many respects, the emergent advocacy press echoed the editorial philosophy of the U.S. underground press of the 1960s as well as the 'new journalism' movement of that era both of which privileged 'truth' over facts. And for Tom Wolfe, Norman Mailer and other leaders of the 'new journalism' movement; truth can only be unearthed in the writer or journalist's 'subjective' engagement with his work (Altschull, 1984: 203-4). The recognition of truth as a subjective ideal underscores the enormous influence of social and personal value systems on the ethical choices made by writers and journalists especially when dealing with contentious issues. The great English novelist George Orwell, one of the leading polemical journalists of all times stressed the importance of such value systems thus: 'everyone writes of them in one guise or another. It is simply a question of which side one takes and what approach one follows. And the more one is conscious of one's political bias, the more chance one has of acting politically without sacrificing one's aesthetic and intellectual integrity' (cited in Hirst and Patching, 2007: 15). Critics of "the regime of objectivity" (Hackett and Zhao, 1997) have often argued that it is hegemonic and fosters the interest of dominant groups in society. This it does by, among other things, the over reliance on and validation of official or establishment sources as well as by its insistence on political neutrality which usually favors the status quo. Further, the norm of objectivity, they argue, endorses the for profit goal of the liberal media as political neutrality leads to audience maximization which in turn empowers advertisers at the expense of subaltern citizens. In effect, the mercantilist values of the liberal press became synonymous with the professional ideals of objectivity (Altschull, 1984: 128-131, Gross, 2002: 119, Allan, 2005: 9, Keeble, 2005: 62, Hackett and Zhao, 1997). However, a counter-hegemonic framework has emerged in the ideals of "critical subjectivity" (Keeble, 2005: 58) in which alternative media challenge the pro-establishment bias of the mainstream media by privileging politics over ethics. As Chris Atton explains:

Skeptical of what counts as balance in the mainstream media, they (alternative media) seek to set up their own counter-balance. Hence the argument runs, the viewpoints already dominant in the mainstream media

do not need repeating. What appears as bias and the absence of balance in the alternative media is to be considered not as a set of absolute truths: instead, it comprises a set of accounts told from different perspectives.
(cited in Keeble, 2005: 63)

The obvious limitations of the 'regime of objectivity' has led eminent media ethicist Clifford Christians (1995: 84-9) to propose a new and radically different ethical code of practice for journalists in which a "fulsome concept of truth" located in the moral rather than the epistemological sphere becomes communication's master principle. Such a fundamental shift from the epistemological to the moral, he argues, would reorder the professional culture of the news media to serve democratization. Although Christian's normative framework is yet to be fully developed, its strong moral imperative point to what some refer to as the 'journalism of conscience'. And in contemporary journalism, one of its most ardent proponents is Martin Bell, the former veteran BBC correspondent who covered some of the worst armed conflicts of the last quarter of the 20th century. Dismissing the notion of objectivity as "something of an illusion and a shibboleth" that promotes "*bystanders' journalism*" (italics his), Bell instead proposes what he calls "*the journalism of attachment*" (italics his): "a journalism that cares as well as knows; that is aware of its responsibilities; that will not stand neutrally between good and evil, right and wrong, the victim and the oppressor". He however made a subtle even if fuzzy distinction between 'crusading journalism' which usually uses only evidence that support its cause and is better suited for political and polemical literature than the daily reporting of news and the "*journalism of attachment*" which does not necessarily "back one side or faction or people against another" but nonetheless recognizes the power of the press to influence, for better or for worse, the outcome of events it covers (Bell, 1998: 15-6). While Bell developed his 'journalism of attachment' primarily in the context of societies thorn by war, its dualities of 'good versus evil', 'right versus wrong' and 'victim versus oppressor' have broader resonance and are inherent in other forms of political and social conflicts.

In the specific context of Nigeria where basic democratic institutions were either in abeyance or severely compromised under military rule and have remained hopelessly dysfunctional afterwards, poet and political commentator, Odi Ofeimun advocates for what he calls "prosecutorial journalism"—"a journalism which does not necessarily follow the rule but will stick to the pursuit of the truth irrespective of the inconvenience

caused to itself"; a bold, daring approach that pushes news reporting to its limits.

According to him, pushing to the limits:

Means that where the courts have failed and political parties do not mobilize or aggregate opinion and where executives in government do not perform the roles executives are elected to perform, the press can go one leg faster than all the institutions in the society. Although, it may not be able to act as a political party, it can mobilize; although it may not be able to execute policies it can sensitize people to form such organizations that may help the execution of policies, although it may not be a court of law it can help bring a sense of justice to social situations so that those who must act will know how to act properly. But above everything, it also means that even if a court does not do its duty the press can present all the facts of a case and dare the individuals to say it is not true. It needs to behave this way...because almost all the institutions that would help prosecute have been taken over by the thieves themselves.

(Dare, 1999: 18)

Such a press, Ofeimun further argues must embrace an "activist" agenda-setting role which not only asserts the 'truth' but also ensures that other social groups adhere to it. And in doing so, it must be "objectively partisan" by reflecting other viewpoints without abdicating responsibility for causes it considers "just and right" (Dare, 1999: 18-9).

The leading advocacy press which best embodied these ideals happen to be weekly news magazines mostly founded by groups of journalists who had previously worked for the liberal press. Although the feature format of magazines naturally fosters an interpretive rather than strict reportorial approach to news, the advocacy press, as earlier mentioned, clearly espoused a more activist journalistic temperament in relation with the traditionally circumspect liberal press. Driven primarily by an abiding commitment to social justice, many of the journalists to embrace this model were not only student activists during their college years but were also strongly influenced by the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa which was at its peak in the 1980s (Olorunyomi, 1999: 235-6). Not surprisingly, they saw journalism primarily as a means to the end of military rule and the enthronement of a strong democratic culture founded on social justice. Unlike the liberal press driven primarily by commercial success, the fledgling advocacy press, as we shall see shortly, paid a heavy personal and economic price for its anti-military stance despite its popularity with the reading public. Since *Newswatch* magazine pioneered hardnosed investigative journalism in Nigeria in the mid-to late 1980s, several news magazines many of which were founded by groups of journalists have followed in that tradition. These include *African Guardian* and *African*

Concord (both now rested), *Tell* (which broke away from *Newswatch*), *The News* (which broke away from *African Concord*), *The Sunday Magazine (TSM)*, *The Source* (which broke away from TSM), *The Week* and *The Insider* (which broke away from *Tell* in 2001). However, the tradition of advocacy journalism as outlined in this chapter is arguably best practiced by *Tell* and *The News*, two very popular weeklies who played a critical role in ending military rule by very closely aligning with pro-democracy groups and giving a voice to their agitation. Their journalistic philosophy, travails under successive military regimes and overall role in democratization will be discussed next.

5.4.1. *Tell*

Following roughly three years of planning, *Tell Communications Limited* was established in the last quarter of 1990 by five journalists—three mid-level editors and two senior writers—who broke away *Newswatch*. The magazine made its debut on April 8, 1991 under the editorial leadership of Nosa Igiebor (Editor-in-Chief), Dele Omotunde (Deputy Editor-in-Chief), Onome Osifo-Whiskey (Managing Editor), Kola Ilori and Dare Babarinsa (both Executive Editors); and the financial backing of a small number of investors whose identities were at the time kept secret to protect them from any potential backlash from the military government. The investors who generally shared the magazine's editorial philosophy were however required not to interfere in editorial matters (Igiebor, 2004). As already discussed, *Newswatch* pioneered hardnosed investigative reporting in its early years; a practice that made it very popular with the public but also got it on collision course with the military regime of General Babangida. The assassination by parcel bomb of its founding Editor-in-Chief, Dele Giwa on October 19, 1986 and the subsequent six month proscription of the magazine in April 1987 for publishing the leaked report of the Dr. J.S. Cooley led committee on Nigeria's political future sent shockwaves across the country and in particular the critical media (see Chapter 2). Over time, the founders of *Tell* concluded that Giwa's death has had the exact effect its perpetrators hoped for: force *Newswatch* to scale back its robust investigative brand of journalism thus becoming increasingly "staid and conservative" (Ibelema, 2003: 174). As Nosa Igiebor, *Tell*'s Editor-in-Chief explains:

Our journalism was a radical departure from what *Newswatch* was doing. *Newswatch* was basically what I will call 'safe, do not disturb' kind of journalism. But we changed all that by frontally taking on issues and addressing them very critically... Of course when those changes came

after the murder of Dele Giwa, we did understand the climate of fear because the murder was done to intimidate *Newswatch* and unfortunately, they fell for it. It became very obvious then that *Newswatch* had changed very radically in the opposite direction. So the excitement was gone and it was one of the reasons we said No, we can no longer work in this environment, we need to go out and not necessarily to recreate *Newswatch*, but to do something different and that's exactly what we have tried to do. (Igiebor, 2004)

Their other reasons for leaving *Newswatch* include the quest for professional advancement and fulfillment, grievances over poor remuneration and broken promises and the feeling that the place had become less worker-friendly due to the alienation of top management from the rest of the staff. They also took with them some of *Newswatch*'s top marketing and production staff as well as the cream of her mid-level reportorial core. Their departure understandably led to some bad blood and recrimination between the two organizations; a situation that grew even more acrimonious with *Tell*'s rather impish marketing gibe aimed at their former employers: "Others Watch the News. We Tell It". In response, a *Newswatch* executive dismissed *Tell*'s style of journalism as "subjective and unprofessional" (Olukotun, 2003: 79); a sentiment that became prevalent both in government circles and within the liberal press. In the maiden edition on April 8, 1991, *Tell* declared its editorial philosophy thus: "To tell the news as it is; to interpret and analyze the news based on facts; and to hold government accountable to the governed (the Nigerian people) as required of the press, the fourth estate of the realm, by the Constitution. Above all, we are for democracy, the rule of law and the sovereignty of the Nigerian people" (cited in Akinkoutu, 1999: 136-7).

Curiously, despite its censure of *Newswatch*, very little in *Tell*'s 'strategy paper' leading up to its launch suggested an overly activist journalistic philosophy that was radically different from the other critical privately owned newsmagazines. If anything the document was heavy on strategies—marketing, production, editorial and logistical—that would help establish it as the leading news magazine in the country but vague on its political values. For example, although the 'strategy paper' underscored *Tell*'s editorial independence in contrast to government owned media and "the imperial publicity outposts of money bags with political ambitions", it merely states its goal as "the uncompromising maintenance of highly exacting editorial standards and relentless pursuit of excellence at all times". And while recognizing the need to occasionally stir up debates on key national issues and reporting on them "as part of our commitment to

public service journalism”; it explicitly limited the use of “advocacy journalism” to its ‘Back of the Book’ section dealing with such issues as education, environment, religion, science and technology, health, fashion, music, law among others. According to the ‘strategy paper’, *Tell* would strive to meet “the information needs of the highly discerning segment” of the Nigerian society at the core of which are “the decision makers, policy formulators and implementers, young upwardly mobile men and women in government, business, politics, (and the) academia” (Tell Undated Strategy Paper). In effect, its core target audience was the Nigerian elite; a paradox of sorts for a magazine that became very popular with the masses, particularly under military rule.

The seeming discrepancy between *Tell*’s vision as articulated in the ‘strategy paper’ and what it eventually became, is largely a consequence of the political reality it faced following its debut in April 1991. The magazine which had been in the works for about three years finally hit the newsstands at a very critical juncture in the transition to civil rule program initiated by General Babangida in 1986. As Ayo Olukotun (2004: 80-1) explains,

the early promise of the Babangida years had worn thin: the economic reforms he launched a few years before had been pretty much derailed; the transition program was going through the convulsions of an over-directed script with frequent changes being made by fiat; the middle class, battered by the woes of adjustment, was restless; students were restive; and general discontent was in evidence. (Olukotun, 2004: 80-1)

The political situation degenerated very rapidly between 1991 and 1992 as a desperate General Babangida, with increasingly little wriggle room for maneuver, finally had to either bring the transition program to a credible conclusion by handing over power to a democratically elected government or try to cling on to power as had long been suspected. From the outset, the transition program was beset by manipulations leading to widespread speculation that General Babangida had a “hidden agenda” aimed at self-succession. His government’s increased repression of critical voices in the months leading up to the June 12, 1993 presidential election which, he ultimately annulled, merely confirmed what many had feared. The annulment plunged Nigeria into a massive political crisis that lasted for another five years pitching the critical press and pro-democracy forces against the military and their apologists. Without doubt, the long drawn transition program with its many twists and turns helped define the advocacy press. *Tell* which had struggled financially in its first two years due to poor sales and

weak advert support came on its own in 1993 largely on account of the many lead stories it did exposing the transition program and the Babangida government as a fraud. As more and more people came to that realization; thanks to the magazine's exposes, its sales figures rose dramatically making it a preferred medium for pro-democracy groups and the vast majority opposed to continuing military rule. Editor-in-Chief Nosa Igiebor acknowledged that the June 12 political crises shaped the magazine as it had to respond to the demands of the time. Inevitably, its advocacy tradition continued under the even more brutal regime of General Abacha who seized power in the wake of the June 12, 1993 political crises (Adebanjo, 2001).

In some respects, *Tell* can be called a child of circumstance. While there is no denying the strong social conscience and crusading spirit of its founders, the magazine which was forged in the crucible of the June 12, 1993 political crises was undeniably more activist than what they had originally conceived. But once forced into a stark choice between despotism and freedom, they unequivocally opted for the latter even at great corporate and personal costs as we shall see. According to Editor-in-Chief Nosa Igiebor (2004) *Tell* sought to:

Shake up Nigerian journalism from its complacency. Nigerian journalism was going through a period of docility where it simply lost its way. We fell into the trap of thinking that well to challenge the state, to challenge the government, to challenge policies in a very fundamental way, in a frontal, daring manner would be inviting trouble. Some even argued then that 'well, is it really the place of journalists to fight government'? By fighting government they mean always criticizing. And we were openly accused, even by colleagues in the media of engaging in sensational journalism; of trying to attract attention to ourselves because our magazine was struggling. But we were very clear headed as to what we were doing. We were convinced... that something was wrong with the profession; that something was wrong with the country where everybody gets conned by the military regime of General Babangida. In the press, you see people singing praises of him. We just couldn't operate in that environment pretending that things were right. ..We decided to do things differently. ...People knew where we stood; people knew we were a critical journal; not necessarily every story has to be abusive or critical of government. But we chose to address issues in such a direct manner that people were forced to look at those issues; to ask questions; to take a fresh look at those very fundamental issues upon which this country existed that have either remained unresolved or their solutions were not done right.

(Igiebor, 2004)

Whether it is in exposing governmental corruption, human rights violations or the self-succession schemes of the military juntas and their civilian sidekicks, *Tell* adopted a brash, hard-hitting, and provocative style that riled government officials. For example, barely six weeks after General Abacha toppled the Interim National Government (ING), the magazine published a cover story in its January 10, 1994 edition titled: “The Return of Tyranny: Abacha Bares His Fangs”. It was a critical review of the 10 decrees the General promulgated in his first month in office, one of which, Decree 107, gave him absolute powers to make laws (Akinkoutu, 1999: 137). Such provocative titles became a hallmark of its lead stories. *Tell* also came to embody the ideal of people centered journalism which it cast as a ‘social contract’ with Nigerians. In affirming the sovereignty of the people by making them the centerpiece of its editorial decisions, it hoped to address the serious governance problems that have bedeviled Nigeria since independence (Igiebor, 2004). The populism undoubtedly helped it get through the military years when with little advert support it survived almost solely on the patronage of an appreciative public (Akinkoutu, 1999: 134). By the mid 1990s, *Tell* had changed from its early promotional pitch of ‘telling the news while others watch’ to declaring itself “the Peoples’ Parliament” underscoring its status as arguably the most popular weekly newsmagazine in the country. The change was also in response to the high feedback it was getting from readers by way of letters to the editor which averaged about 3,000 per edition. *Tell* therefore decided to provide a platform for the readers (usually 2 to 3 pages) to express their views not only on stories published in the magazine but on other issues that may exercise their minds. The idea of ‘parliament’ further reflects the collectivist editorial philosophy of *Tell* where no single person can get a story into the magazine without it being fully debated and agreed on by all (Igiebor, 2004). The travails of *Tell*, the strategies it used to survive the military clampdown and its overall contribution to democratization will be discussed shortly after a brief outline of the second major advocacy publication, *The News*.

5.4.2. *The News*

Like *Tell*, *The News*, another weekly newsmagazine founded by journalists was in every respect a child of protest but unarguably more activist from conception. It made its debut on February 8, 1993 (barely two years after *Tell*) at a time of even greater unease and uncertainty over the transition to civil rule program. The founding editors of

The News, Bayo Onanuga, Dapo Olorunyomi, Femi Ojudu, Seye Kehinde and Kunle Ajibade, had resigned from *African Concord* magazine in April 1992 following its closure by the military government of General Babangida. *African Concord* was published by billionaire businessman Chief Moshood Abiola, who at the time was a confidante of General Babangida. He would later contest the annulled June 12, 1993 presidential election which he was presumed to have resoundingly won but died in custody in 1998 in an effort to actualize his mandate. The friendship between General Babangida and Chief Abiola before their June 12, 1993 political fallout meant that the publications under Abiola's Concord Press chain were hardly critical of the Babangida administration. *African Concord* proved to be the exception as it not only developed a fiercely independent streak but was often very critical of the administration's policies and programs making it, at the time, the leading newsmagazine in the country.

However, the cover story in the April 13, 1992 edition of the magazine titled "Has Babangida Given Up?" riled the regime such that it shut down the magazine for about 12 weeks along with other Concord Press titles and non-media related businesses operating out of a different facility several kilometers away from the magazine's office. The regime insisted on a public apology from the editor Bayo Onanuga before the premises could be reopened. Pressed by his publisher (Chief Abiola) to apologize to the president specifically for the discomfort the story had caused him and members of his family, Onanuga refused and instead resigned along with four of his immediate subordinates who quit in solidarity with him. His resignation letter was not only defiant but also underscored his editorial philosophy: "Journalism is not meant to make the environment cozy for leaders of nations, it is meant to prod them to act in the interest of the larger society: It is meant to cause them sleepless nights" (cited in Ajibade, 2003: 12). The bewildered publisher, Chief Abiola replied that he did not set up his publishing company "to give anybody sleepless nights". In a personal chat days later with Kunle Ajibade, one of the editors who resigned in solidarity with him, Onanuga elaborated on what he considers the primary responsibility of the press in a country like Nigeria:

We are called the watchdogs, or even the guard dogs, or the bridge between the rulers and the ruled. We should not only mirror what the government is doing, but also the feelings of the people, particularly in an environment where you don't have a viable opposition, where you don't have genuine democratic structures. The press should be there to play the role of a responsible opposition party. Once the press abdicates that responsibility, there will be problems...When I said the press should give

leaders sleepless nights, it is in that context. I believe every bad leader should be afraid of opening the papers every morning.

(Ajibade, 2003: 12-3)

In the months that followed, the five editors worked on establishing a newsmagazine reflective of their political ideals. To that end, Onanuga produced a strategy paper titled “Which Way: Inventing an Editorial Compass for the News” in which he reviewed existing newsmagazines in the country and concluded that “they are not probing enough; they sound too boring and have become too uncritical of government. No magazine in the world can be very successful if it does not at times or most times wear the armor of the opposition or the critic. The reader likes his magazine to be very critical and bold” (Onanuga, 1992). The Independent Communications Network Limited was incorporated in September 1992 and six months later (February 1993) launched *The News*, a glossy weekly as its flagship title. The company’s initial share structure was modeled after the *Independent* of London with no single owner holding controlling shares (Olukotun, 2004: 83). Aside from the five journalists, Sani Kabir, a businessman provided financial and logistical support especially in getting the company started and Idowu Obasa, an experienced chartered accountant, some management expertise.

In its maiden edition on February 8, 1993, *The News* declared itself “an independent medium dedicated to the development of...society through a balanced reporting and analysis of people, places and events...” and “...dedicated to the promotion of the principles of civilized nationalism, democracy, political and economic pluralism, liberty and the equality of the various ethnic groups of the Nigerian Federation”. It however warned that the magazine’s interest in balanced coverage “is no excuse for opportunism and spineless neutrality on the major issues that affect the well-being of the Nigerian people” stressing that it “shall be partisanly (*sic*) neutral on the side of truth, justice and good government” (cited in Onanuga, 1999: 142). The unequivocal declaration made it clear that the magazine “was not going to quiver before the military. It was not going to collaborate; it was going to be resolutely anti-establishment” (Onanuga, 1999: 142).

5.4.3. The Die Was Cast: Advocacy Press and the Military

As already observed, both *Tell* and *The News* emerged at a critical juncture in the transition to civil rule program when an increasingly desperate General Babangida

finally either had to deliver on his promise to return the country to democratic rule or cling on to power as many had long suspected. Since the program was launched in 1986, he had changed its terminal date at least three times: October 1, 1990, October 1, 1992 and finally August 27, 1993. Such equivocation led many to allege he harbored a 'hidden agenda'; a charge often led by the advocacy press. As 1993 dawned amid worsening economic problems and general restiveness across the country, little by way of its actions indicated a regime on its way out and a transition program in its twilight. On the contrary, he appeared inclined to hang on to power as evidenced in increased repression of pro-democracy activists and the critical media. For example, on May 22, 1993, barely three months after its debut and a little over two weeks to the June 12, 1993 presidential election—the final act of the transition program—*The News* was shut down by state security agents and remained under lock for the next six months. The 'offensive' story as with the others leading up to the closure of the magazine focused on Babangida's manipulation of the transition program through bribery, patronage and elimination of his political foes as well as the plot within the ruling military hierarchy to abort the handover of power to an elected government. For weeks, the magazine defied security agents who occupied its office by publishing underground causing the government to now formally proscribe it through a backdated decree and declared its editors wanted. In response, the company floated *Tempo*, a weekly in tabloid form which is much easier to produce given the production challenges it was dealing with at the time (Ajibade, 2003, 1-7, Onanuga, 1999: 142).

Similarly, in the weeks leading up to the June 12, 1993 presidential election, several thousand copies of *Tell* magazine were seized in various cities and staff at its head office harassed over several days by security agents looking to interrogate the editors. The seizures include 26, 000 copies of two editions of the magazine, 20, 000 copies of its May 3, 1993 edition with the cover title: "The Peoples' Verdict: Go, IBB, Go", and 6, 000 copies of its April 19, 1993 edition featuring an exclusive interview with former military head of state, General Obasanjo in which he flatly declared the General Babangida regime "a fraud". However, the largest haul by security agents during the period was the 70, 000 copies of the May 10, 1993 edition of the magazine titled: "Transition: 21 Traps Against Handover" which security agents seized at the premises of the magazine's printers just as it was about to be delivered (Akinkoutu, 1993). The eventual annulment of the June 12, 1993 presidential election, as predicted, led to an

escalation of hostilities between state security agents and the critical press which remained defiant. On August, 15, 1993, armed agents stormed the office of *Tell* and arrested four editors: Nosa Igiebor (Editor-in-Chief), Onome Osifo-Whiskey (Managing Editor), Kolawole Ilori (Executive Editor) and Ayodele Akinkuotu (Senior Associate Editor). They also took with them several documents from the office including two post annulment, July 1993 editions of the magazine with cover titles: “Stolen Presidency: IBB Wages war on the Nation” and “Nigeria: Waiting for the Worst”. The editors who were moved from Lagos (where the magazine is based) to the capital city Abuja and were charged with possessing seditious materials and released on bail after 12 days in custody. Along with several other acts of intimidation and physical assault of *Tell*’s staff in the month of August 1993 was the seizure on August 20 of 30, 000 copies of the magazine from the premises of its printers. The seized edition had the cover title: “Enough is Enough: Opposition Against the Babangida Regime Mounts” (Adebanjo, 1993).

The News faced similar onslaught from security agents in the immediate month following the annulled election in what was a calculated attempt to cripple their operation and break them financially. But both publications outlived Babangida who unable to quell the intense local and international outrage over the annulled election hastily resigned on August 26, 1993 replacing himself with a handpicked and short-lived Interim National Government (ING) which itself was toppled by Defense Minister General Sani Abacha on November 17. The Abacha dictatorship, unarguably the most venal and brutal in Nigeria’s history lasted until his sudden death on June 8, 1998. A megalomaniac obsessed with self succession, Abacha on settling into office initiated a new transition to civil rule program aimed solely at transforming himself into a civilian president. His nearly five years in power saw unprecedented levels of repression of the critical press and pro-democracy groups; acts some of which bordered on state terrorism (see Chapter 2).

Not surprisingly, for much of the period between mid-1993 (the last weeks of the Babangida’s presidency) until General Abacha’s death in early June 1998, the advocacy press operated largely underground either due to formal proscription or as a safety measure to elude state security operatives determined to hunt them down. This gave rise to the phenomena of “guerilla journalism” in which the “notion of a newsroom was transformed from a regular static setting into a dynamic, on-the-wheel experience” in which “reporters and editors, constantly on the move, had to write, edit, and publish

clandestinely in surreptitious locations” (Olorunyomi, 1999: 237-8). Even before raids by security agencies on critical media houses became rampant, Nobel literature Laureate and political activist Prof. Wole Soyinka had, at a lecture, challenged them to find creative ways to elude such attacks. “Why are you all so unimaginative as to let Babangida’s police raid your offices, your printing presses, and cart off copies of your journals without a fight?” he asked. “Have you never heard of underground publishing? Set up more than one editorial office and divide up your pages among various presses. Use fronts. Scatter your editors and let your journalists link up with them by telephone, fax, carrier pigeon, if it comes to that” (cited in Ajibade, 2003: xii). They certainly heeded his call, or better still, the intensified crackdown by state security agents forced them to rethink their production strategies for as Nosa Igiebor, Editor-in-Chief of *Tell* explained:

...their (government’s) business was to ensure we don’t publish. Ours was to ensure that we come out without fail. This meant reorganizing our approach to producing. Rather than stay on one spot and become sitting ducks for state security, we had to be several steps ahead of them. By spreading out and operating in several centers or cells. If we use your house this week, we vary the next week and use another house. We, of course, had to preserve the anonymity of the owners and venues of our cells.
(cited in Olukotun, 2004: 81)

The ‘guerilla journalism’ strategies evolved as the crackdown intensified. In the early going in *Tell*

Editors sneaked in and out of the office. When they came... mostly on foot, and they saw strange faces lurking around the premises or filling visitors’ forms, they themselves behaved like visitors. It was when they got the sign that the coast was clear that they stayed to hold five-minute conferences on corridors. Fresh assignments were sent in through couriers and completed assignments dropped in designated places termed ‘Bush Office’ or simply ‘The Bush’. The office is always changing.
(Akinkuotu, 1999: 132)

Overall, *Tell* used “over seven BUSH Offices” during General Abacha’s nearly five year rule “some of which were produced in extreme emergencies while others were vacated almost without notice” but all made possible by “an appreciative and committed Nigerian public who made enormous sacrifices to see the magazine through its darkest hour” (Akinkoutu, 1999: 134). *The News* also benefitted immensely from the goodwill of the public in executing its guerilla journalism strategies. Such help often came by way of rent-free housing and solidarity purchase of the magazine in the face of little advert

support. Septuagenarian businessman and pro-democracy financier, Pa Alfred Rewane, prior to his October 6, 1995 murder right in his bedroom by suspected agents of the state, provided small advert support to the magazines and financial assistance to the families of detained journalists (Olukotun, 2003: 82, 84). Kunle Ajibade of *The News* offers some insight into the magazine's early effort at guerilla journalism following its first and arguably most challenging closure by security agents. Shut out of its office by security agents on May 22, 1993—barely three months after its debut—the editors of *The News* continued to produce the magazine clandestinely for another three weeks before it was proactively proscribed by the government causing them to replace it, albeit temporarily, with a new title in tabloid format called *Tempo*. The tabloid format (without a glossy cover page) made for cheaper and faster production given their operational circumstances. And with tips from disgruntled government officials, they were mostly able to stay ahead of security agents. A friend of the founding editors offered his Business Center on Bamgbose Street, Lagos Island for the magazine's use. Curiously, the location was only blocks away from the heavily militarized former State House at Dodan Barracks and the Lagos office of the Nigerian Police Force—an unlikely production point for a proscribed magazine whose editors had just been declared wanted on national television. The place was known only to a few very 'trusted' typesetting staff (the rest were sent on leave) and senior staff involved at that point of editing. The production aspect was split into two units, typesetting and printing, with the magazine overall operating in small 'cells'. The entire editorial staff did not have to meet together any longer. While desk heads met to put stories together, reporters only had access to their desk heads. The use of a dispatcher ensured that no more than four or five people were together at a particular place at the same time. Only the founding editors knew where the magazine was printed and, at least, two printing facilities were used during the period. Frustrated by its inability to stop the production of the magazine and arrest its editors, the government, at one point, claimed they were operating out of the American Embassy in Lagos¹² (Ajibade, 2003:5-8).

Yet it was primarily their disguise strategies that for long periods kept them a step or two ahead of security agents. Small and often casually dressed editorial 'cells' of *The*

¹² The U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria at the time was Walter Carrington, an African American who sometimes went beyond diplomatic niceties to slam the military regimes on the annulled election and their atrocious human rights record.

News conferred in the most unlikely of places: theatres, stadiums, gyms, taxi cabs, bars, restaurants, hotel lobbies and even the open streets (Dare, 1998, Olorunyomi, 1999: 238, Olukotun, 2003:97). The sprawling terrain and densely populated nature of Lagos—Nigeria’s media headquarters—made it a good fit for guerilla practice (Olukotun, 2004: 87). The decoy also extended to the distribution of the magazine as it abandoned its own delivery trucks and other regular means of distribution for passenger vehicles and commercial haulage trucks travelling under the cover of night and on occasions, hospital ambulances and fire trucks (Olukotun, 2004: 97, Dare, 1998).

Despite the siege, editors of *The News* and *Tell* used whatever means they could to get their magazines to the newsstands across the country every Monday morning. This caused frustrated security agents to sometimes turn their anger on the street vendors who sold the publications. The intimidation, harassment and in some cases arraignment of newspaper vendors was common between 1993 and General Abacha’s death in June 1998. One of the earliest examples of that tactic was in mid-1993 when police in the city of Warri arraigned two vendors, Onamakpor Onabare and Owete Bernard, for selling *Tempo* magazine which allegedly contained “seditious materials” capable of “causing disaffection among members of the public and make them rebel against the authority of the Federal government” (Olukotun, 2004: 83-4). *Tempo* had just replaced *The News* following its proscription weeks earlier. The harassment of street vendors arguably reached a crescendo in the second half of 1993 following the annulled June 12 presidential elections of that year. Babatunde Olugboji, then of the Constitutional Rights Project (CRP) captured the situation best “In several incidents in the second half of 1993, armed security personnel riding on police vans or unmarked cars descended on vendors in several cities across the country , firing guns into the air, confiscating ‘offending’ publications and arresting vendors hawking such publications. More than any other publication, *Tell* and *The News* suffered the most harassment in the hands of General Babangida’s security agents” (cited in Olukotun, 2004: 88). But the vendors could not stop carrying both publications which were a hit with the public; so popular that they sometimes sold photocopies of them. However, unlike other publications, they did not display them openly and only admitted to having them if they were convinced the potential customer was not a security mole. There was the tragic case of a vendor selling *Tempo* who was struck and killed by a fast-moving car as he tried to escape from the police. The reading public was not spared either as evidenced in

the June 25, 1993 arrest of four men at the Federal Secretariat in Minna for buying and reading photocopies of *The News* (Olorunyomi, 1999: 237-8). Even the magazines' distributors in major cities were also targeted by security agents.

So resilient were both publications that they did not miss an edition despite the sustained crackdown. For every edition seized by security agents they reproduced often in tabloid form and a reduced print run. It is estimated that over 650, 000 copies of *Tell Magazine* were cumulatively seized by security agents (Akinkuotu, 1999: 134). Part of their contingency plan early in the fight was to introduce alternative titles in tabloid form which is easier to produce clandestinely. *The News* (following its proscription in 1993) launched *Tempo* and *Tell* came out with *Dateline*.

Operating underground meant the journalists not only had to avoid their offices but also their homes which were under surveillance by security agents. They had zero social life and were constantly moving from one hideout to another. Their elusiveness sometimes led to the arrest or harassment of family members. That was the case with founding editor of *The News/Tempo* Dapo Olorunyomi whose wife and three month old baby were briefly arrested in 1993 by security agents. He subsequently escaped into exile in the US and was later joined by his family (Olorunyomi, 1999: 238-9). In a commando-like midnight operation on September 10, 1997, a combined team of heavily armed policemen and state security agents stormed the Ikeja-Lagos home of Nosa Igiebor, Editor-in-Chief of *Tell* magazine. They gained access by scaling the compound wall. Apparently frustrated that he was not home, they put a gun to the head of his four-year-old daughter asking; "where is your daddy"? Having previously spent six months in detention between late 1995 and 1996, Igiebor sensed his life was on the line and fled into exile in London. A similar commando-like operation targeted *Tell's* Managing Editor, Onome Osifo-Whiskey who on November 9, 1997 was abducted at gun point in the presence of his four children as they drove to church that Sunday morning. His captors told him they were from the presidency and he was not released until six months later (Akinkuotu, 1999, 132). Marked for elimination by state security agencies, Managing Director of *The News*, Bayo Onanuga, also fled to the US on November 1, 1994. Both Igiebor and Onanuga tried to direct and contribute to their magazines while abroad using the extensive network of sources within Nigeria's expat pro-democracy community, particularly the resources of its influential pirate radio, Radio Kudirat (Olukotun, 2004: 95-6). The exiled editors returned soon after General Abacha's death in June 1998.

Other egregious cases of press violations during the Abacha years was the mysterious 1996 abduction and death of Bagauda Kaltho, the Northern Correspondent of *The News* and the 1994 detention and subsequent life imprisonment of six senior journalists (including Kunle Ajibade of *The News* and George Mbah of *Tell/Dateline*) for being accessories to the act of treason (see Chapter 2). The 1994 coup is widely believed to be a yarn spun by a desperate government to rope in elements within the military it was uncomfortable with. The indicted journalists were from critical publications which expressed reservations over the veracity of the alleged putsch (see The Committee to Protect Journalists, 1999, Ajibade, 1999, 2003, Akinkuotu, 1999: 139). As already observed Nigeria under General Abacha was one vast gulag for critical, pro-democracy voices. A report by the Nigeria-based Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) put the number of political detainees at the time of his death at two hundred and seventy-four (Ogbondah, 2003: 52).

Another tactics occasionally used by the Abacha regime was the production of fake copies of critical publications, in particular *The News/Tempo* and *Tell/Dateline* replete with flattering stories about the government (Olorunyomi, 1999: 235, Bourgault, 1998). Between the last week of May and the first week of June 1994, there were fake copies of *The News*, *Tempo*, *Tell* and *The Sunday Magazine* on the newsstands prompting the Nigerian Union of Journalists (NUJ) to petition the Inspector General of Police on the trend which it described as a “terrible development” unprecedented in the history of professional journalism practice in Nigeria (Lawal, 1994). Beyond the standard raids and harassments which are clearly aimed at intimidating the critical publications, there were also evidence of more sophisticated psychological operations which often came by way of threat letters and anonymous phone calls. For example, twice in 1993 and 1995, *Tell* received a threat letter from a group that called itself The Delta Force claiming it has been contracted to eliminate two of the magazine’s editors, Onome Osifo-Whiskey and Kolawole Ilori, along with their wives. They demanded a ransom to be paid in three days or they would follow through with the plan. Similar threats were repeated in 1996 and 1997. Even more frightening was an October 1997 phone call to *Tell*’s office from the news editor of another media house asking which of the magazine’s editors had just been assassinated. Soon after the call, reporters from several media houses arrived at *Tell* trying to confirm the rumor. Since the editors had been in hiding for over two years during which they were hardly in regular contact with the vast majority of the

magazine's staff, it took over 24 hours for the staff to confirm that all the editors were not only still alive but that none was actually shot (Akinkuotu, 1999: 135-6).

Ironically, despite the heroic efforts of the advocacy press in standing up to brutal military governments, it was General Abacha's sudden death on June 8, 1998 that, more than anything, paved the way for the return of democratic rule bringing to an end Nigeria's roughly 14 year long transition to civil rule program. However, the advocacy press, through its crusading; take no prisoners brand of journalism helped undermine military rule by constantly questioning not just its credibility but also its legitimacy. The strategy overtime made the military's hold on power increasingly tenuous. In what became a fierce dogfight with "the state terror machine" of General Abacha; a fight that Odia Ofeimun, Chairman of the editorial board of *The News* and *Tempo* admitted became "personal" (cited in Olukotun, 2004), the advocacy press was able to undermine Abacha's effectiveness especially with respect to his core agenda of self succession which was already endorsed by the five registered political parties that were his fronts. He was so loathed that his death led to instant public celebrations all over the country. Despite its stranglehold on the nation's broadcast system (including the sole coast-to-coast radio and television transmission capacity), the Abacha regime still lost the battle for the control of public opinion thanks in part to the advocacy press. The more the junta tried to show it was in complete control, the more the advocacy press succeeded in projecting, often through provocative headlines, a general state of anarchy and a regime on the verge of implosion. Some in the liberal press have criticized the headlines as alarmist and the substance of some of the stories embellished if not exaggerated.¹³

Terms like 'militant', 'adversarial', 'crusading', 'advocacy' press among others have been used to describe the type of journalism practiced by *Tell* and *The News*. So how would both publications describe themselves? Not surprisingly, they are not only dismissive of but also uncomfortable with labels of any sorts. As Igiebor of *Tell* argues

People are only militant to the extent that this is a country where there are no rules; where anything goes;...where people in government break the law with impunity and nothing happens to them. So when you say no, this is not the right way to do things you are accused of being militant. What are we advocating? That the government should live up to its promises?

¹³ For an index of *The News* and *Tempo* editions between 1994 and 1998, see Onanuga, 1999: 147-150).

That those in government should govern responsibly. Well, if that amounts to advocacy journalism, well and good. But I am really wary of labels. I just believe that if only journalists can sit down and look at themselves,...ask why they chose to be journalists and what they intend to achieve as journalists, their jobs become easier and they won't need a label to do it.

(Igiebor, 2004)

Bayo Onanuga, Managing Director of *The News* and *Tempo*, argues that for a press to be relevant, especially in a country like Nigeria, it must necessarily be oppositional and he has no problem embracing that label:

Yes, we are not part of the establishment. We're in opposition. And I think that any right thinking newspaper or magazine will never be part of the establishment. If it is actually geared to serve the interest of the public, to discharge its functions, it will always stand in opposition... The press and the government will always oppose each other. The government will not allow the press to survive if it has the power; and the media will always insist that its job is to monitor the government, to really serve as a watchdog—not a lapdog—that can bark and bite at the same time.

(Onanuga, 2004)

Both Igiebor and Onanuga repeatedly underscored the primacy of the people in their philosophy of journalism. Although both editors were unfamiliar with Martin Bell's "journalism of attachment" that exhorts reporters not to stand "neutrally between good and evil", they found it to be very reflective of their philosophy of journalism after it was explained to them. Igiebor saw direct parallel between 'journalism of attachment' and Tell's unequivocal stance against military rule:

We can't compromise. I mean there was no room for compromise. That was why we opposed the military... We knew the Abacha regime was bad for Nigeria, bad for its people; ...Everything we did reflected our belief that the regime was evil. We had no problem at all taking that stand. And we will do the same thing again if circumstances throw up a similar regime or any regime for that matter that is anti-people.

(Igiebor, 2004)

5.4.4. Advocacy Press in the Post-Military Dispensation: Which Way?

The death of General Abacha in June 1998 and the subsequent transfer of power to an elected government in March 1999 restored normalcy to the operations of the advocacy press which had largely operated underground since mid-1993. They not only could now operate freely from their offices but also go about their duties without

watching over their shoulders. But the return of democracy following decades of military rule has led the press in general, and the advocacy press in particular, to rethink its roles and responsibilities under the new political order. For instance, should the advocacy press continue with the military-era adversarial approach that endeared it to Nigerians or does it need a new strategy in the context of a fledgling, even if, floundering democratic system of governance that most Nigerians are experiencing for the first time?

Apparently, both *Tell* and *The News* have struggled with this question. The immediate post-military attitude both within the critical press and pro-democracy segments of civil society who were in the vanguard of the fight against military rule was to give the fledgling democracy a chance to develop; to help nurture it to maturity; to try not to undermine it by persistent criticism which could encourage the return of the military as has been the case in the past. Richard Akinola of the Center for Free Speech (CFS) calls this approach “constructive engagement” (see Aginam, 2008). But the apparent inability of the political class to get its act together led to a quick rethink of the engagement strategy leaving the critical press in a conundrum of sorts. Although *Tell* and *The News* have tried to remain faithful to their people-driven philosophy of journalism, they have also come to realize, sometimes to the consternation of their readers, that they have an entirely different responsibility in the democratic dispensation than they did under the military. For example, while both publications literally adopted the mantle of opposition under military rule, that responsibility in the current democratic dispensation is vested on the opposition party which through its elected representatives has the primary responsibility of articulating the resentment of the people against government policies. The weak and ineffectual nature of the political opposition has often caused the critical press to at times continue with their military-era role (Onanuga, 2004, Igiebor 2004). But Igiebor is particularly concerned about the press overstepping its bounds:

We have to draw a line between our duties and responsibilities as journalists and getting into the political realm of opposing the government on everything as we might lose track of what we are supposed to do. It worries me that the lack of viable political opposition is putting on the shoulders of journalists too much responsibility and too much powers which I really don't believe we can exercise very responsibly.

(Igiebor, 2004)

Adjusting to the new reality of democratic politics has led to accusations that the critical press has compromised its principles. For example, in April 2001, *Tell*'s longtime lawyer and pre-eminent Human Rights activist Gani Fawehinmi withdrew his services to the magazine claiming it had abandoned its constitutional responsibility of holding the government accountable to the people. A month earlier, nine senior editorial staff of *Tell* also left the organization to start a new weekly newsmagazine, *The Insider* claiming *Tell* had lost its focus. *Tell* dismissed the allegations arguing its editorial policy has not changed in any fundamental way since the advent of civil rule. It attributed such misperceptions about its editorial stance to a number of factors. First, in a less repressive political environment, literally any media house can now publish critical reports about government making it more difficult to stand out as *Tell* did during the military era when it was just one of the few publications that had the courage to do so. Second, the obsession with politics during the military era caused the magazine to ignore very important stories in other sectors like health and the environment which are critical to people's daily lives. By broadening its appeal beyond the overly political, *Tell* intends to become a more rounded magazine in line with its original vision before military repression forced it down the activist route. While it will still be people-driven, it will no longer primarily be a political journal. Third, the role of the press is not necessarily to criticize government all the time but also to encourage it when it does right. Unfortunately, many in Nigeria don't think government can ever do right and in truth, the conduct of government officials has not helped. Although Igiebor admitted that *Tell* has been a little less strident in criticizing government than it was under the military, he stressed the need to allow the young democracy to grow from its early missteps;

It's a whole new experience for everyone—the political class, the journalists and the overwhelming majority of Nigerians who were voting for the first time in their lives. And therefore sometimes we have to ask ourselves—shouldn't we be a bit more circumscribed in the way we condemn?...You know, every time you come out with stories condemning the system, you are reinforcing the doubts in people's minds that democracy may not really be worth it. And when people begin to have doubts about whether democracy is worth it and tomorrow another group of military adventurers try to take over government, no one will be motivated to go out there and tell them 'No'. This is where I believe that the media has a very important responsibility to draw the line; to understand that we are walking a very tight rope; yes, there is a need for us to do our jobs the way it should be done but also on the other hand we have to balance that against the larger interest of helping to grow and

sustain the new system that will serve the interest of everybody. So it's a difficult dilemma. (Igiebor, 2004)

Pursuant to its goal of helping foster an enduring democracy, *Tell* in November 2002 organized a two day national conference on "Strategies for Smooth Transition from Civilian to Civilian Government in Nigeria"; a political process which up until 2003 had been elusive. The magazine hoped the conference would help strengthen existing political structures to withstand the forces of disintegration; create a stable economic environment, instill confidence in domestic and foreign investors, reinforce the confidence of the international community in Nigeria's democratic dispensation and prepare the ground for the eventual actualization of the country's potential (Mojeed, 2002).

Another thing that has also changed in the post-military era is the end of the close partnership between the advocacy press and pro-democracy activists and groups. As endangered species under the military, they relied on each other both at home and in exile; united around the common purpose of ending military rule. Many of the activists have since entered partisan politics with some even achieving electoral success. But while *Tell* does not rule out future collaboration with like minded groups should the need arise, it is wary of some pro-democracy and human rights NGOs which it later discovered were not as altruistic as they sounded and had merely used the magazine to enhance their image and raise funds (Igiebor, 2004).

Perhaps more surprising is the now broken relationship between *Tell* and *The News* which under the military forged a strong solidarity and were widely viewed by the public as professional soul-mates. While there is a hint of commercial rivalry in the dispute given that both publications have, from the outset, primarily targeted the same readership, the animosity has more to do with suggestions of impropriety and professional misconduct with respect to major scandals involving public offers that both publications found themselves on different sides of. One such case was the alleged forgery of certificates involving Bola Tinubu; formerly a prominent pro-democracy activist who at the time the scandal in broke in 1999 was the Governor of Lagos State. Unknown to many; the governor had invested in *The News* shortly after the magazine was established in 1993. Between July and August 1999, *The News* and *Tell* were in the forefront of sustained media coverage of allegations of certificate forgery against Salisu Buhari who at the time was the Speaker of the House of Representatives and then

Senate President Evan Enwerem. Both men were literary hounded out of office due to relentless media coverage of the scandals. Shortly after, in October 1999, an almost identical allegation of certificate forgery was made against Governor Tinubu. *Newswatch* magazine broke the story but it was largely ignored by *Tell* and *The News* helping the governor to survive the scandal (See Ogbondah, 2004, Ogbondah, 2003). Their response or lack thereof to the Tinubu scandal left a big question mark on the credibility of both magazines. While *Tell* did not pursue the story with the zeal with which it handled the Enwerem and Buhari scandals, *The News* completely ignored it. Igiebor who knows Governor Tinubu on a personal level and was interacting with him while both were in exile before Abacha's death explained *Tell's* response to the scandal. According to him, when the story broke, he went to the Governor to ascertain the true position thinking at first that his political opponents were after him; "I said, why are you keeping silent; why don't you come and speak to us". But when the governor would not talk to them and started dragging his feet *Tell* became convinced, there were some truth to the allegations. It investigated the story and published it, albeit belatedly, and the governor was not happy about that (Igiebor, 2004). *The News* on its part blacked out the story because of the governor's investment in the company. As Onanuga tried to explain; "during the certificate forgery case, people were saying since we wrote about Buhari (the Speaker) we should also write about Tinubu (the Governor). We said sorry, we can't; others should go and write about it...because we are now caught in between, because he is our shareholder. How can we use our paper to attack our shareholder? It is a real problem. So things like that happen" (Onanuga, 2004). The magazine's handling of the Tinubu case certainly left it with a black eye.

It deserves mention that under the civilian dispensation, there has been few overt efforts to harass and intimidate the critical press. The closest perhaps was a rambling phone call *Tell* got early in 2003 when someone threatened to deal with the magazine over a story it did exposing fraud in the award of contracts for the COJA 8th All African Games that Nigeria was hosting. Nothing came of the threats for which the magazine nonetheless issued a statement alerting the public about. Officials implicated in the story who had ignored *Tell's* request for an interview made a last minute plea to the editors to drop the story. When that failed, they fanned out to newsstands across the nation and tried to buy it off. On learning of the tactics which was occasionally used by security agents during the military era, *Tell* ordered additional copies from its printers to ensure

that the public gets the chance to read the story (Igiebor, 2004). There have also been occasions where people approached *The News* to buy off an entire edition; a request it usually turns down (Onanuga, 2004).

5.5. The Tabloid Press

One often little discussed development in the emergence of privately owned press in the late 1980s was the rise of popular gossip magazines that focused on the salacious private lives of public officials and celebrities. Leading titles of that genre which the Nigerian elite contemptuously called 'junk press', include *Prime People*, *Vintage People*, *City People*, *Today's Choice*, *Classique* among others. These titles fall within what in Europe and North America are commonly referred to as "Supermarket tabloids". The term tabloid does not yield itself to a simple definition as it encompasses quite a range of journalistic practices. Its basic, commonsense usage refers to a handy newspaper of smaller size in contrast to the large and sometimes unwieldy broadsheet. But several prominent publications in tabloid format do not fit the second and often pejorative use of the term which usually refers to a relative focus on popular entertainment, gossip and scandals at the expense of more weighty or substantive issues like the political process and the economy (Sparks, 2000: 10). Without getting bogged down by definitions, it is important to stress that what qualifies as tabloid press is at best relative.

In the Nigerian context, several newspapers dating back to the 1970s have manifested key features of the tabloid form. These include the *Punch* which in its first decade (1973-1982) was largely a light-hearted publication, the now rested *Lagos Life* (from the Guardian Press), *Lagos Weekend and Evening Times* (both published by the Daily Times Group and now defunct) among others. The trend continued in the late 1980s by way of the so called 'junk magazines' or gossip magazines. By the early 1990s, it had become the staple of the Saturday edition of most national newspapers thanks to the great success of *Weekend Concord* which pioneered the tabloid approach among the weekend papers. However, it was not until 2003 that *The Sun*, Nigeria's first national tabloid daily, was launched. Published by the Sun Publishing Company Limited, it first appeared as a weekly on January 18, 2003 and became a daily five months later proclaiming itself Nigeria's "King of Tabloids". Although it shares a name with the popular British tabloid and is largely modeled after it, Managing Director and Editor-in-Chief,

Mike Awoyinfa explains the choice of name in cosmic terms: the sun is the king of the cosmos; the powerhouse of energy whose luminous rays chase away darkness and evil to herald a brand new day. And it shines on all—the good, bad and ugly (see Fabiyi, 2003). The paper approaches news primarily from a human angle and tries to reflect life in all its areas, forms and nuances—politics, economy, crime, religion, sports, arts and culture, fashion and lifestyle, the rich and the poor, stars and ordinary folks, the sinners and the saints and everything in between (The Sun, Undated Strategy Paper). *The Sun* adopted the tabloid approach to fill a perceived gap in the Nigerian press where the leading national newspapers primarily report official (government and business) news and target a mostly upper middle class readership. And it sought to fill that gap not necessarily by ignoring news from political and economic authorities but by making ordinary people the focal point of its coverage of every subject. As the paper's Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Dimgba Igwe explains,

we decided to do a newspaper that will capture the voices of people in their everyday lives; that will reflect their experiences; successes and failures, joys and sorrows; those people other newspapers will never celebrate. We look at every issue primarily from a human interest standpoint and try to avoid abstractions. If it is abstract, we look for a human voice to articulate the abstraction or a human experience to explain it...Stories that working class people identify with and can relate to their own lives. So we basically went back to the art of storytelling.
(Igwe, 2004)

Like most tabloids, *The Sun* presents stories in a colorful, bold and catchy presentational style with liberal use of photographs. However, unlike many tabloids, it has also been active in the coverage of politics playing a key role, along with other privately owned newspapers, in opposing plans by former President, Olusegun Obasanjo to amend the constitution and get himself a third four year term in office. In a few short years, it has unarguably become Nigeria's most popular newspaper even as other leading national dailies continue to struggle in the face of the country's long and severely depressed economy. At its launch in 2003, Editor-in-Chief Mike Awoyinfa had mused that the paper was joining the ranks of the ever-growing and ever vibrant Nigerian press; "all searching for glory and market share under the sun" (Fabiyi, 2003). How prescient.

5.6. Online Citizen Journalism

Like the rest of the world, one journalistic trend that has emerged in Nigeria since the end of military rule is the phenomenon of citizen journalism that refers broadly to efforts often by non-trained journalists or ordinary citizens to collect, analyze and disseminate news information on whatever issues that interest them. This phenomenon took hold with the diffusion of the internet which made it easier disseminate such information to audiences across the world. While some of the initiatives are linked to a specific issue or event—sometimes a live and unfolding event—others like regular news organizations attend to a broad range of issues and subjects. Various called “grassroots journalism”, “open source journalism”, “participatory journalism”, “networked journalism”, “user-generated content” among others, it speaks broadly to the capacity of ordinary people to bear witness to events around them (Allan, 2009: 18) and by so doing help frame the narrative.

Mark Deuze (2009) has identified three distinct perspectives to citizen journalism: the industry perspective that sees it as a way to reduce cost of news gathering by using the free labour of citizen-volunteers; the solipsistic perspective marked by very personal and opinionated contributions of citizens on whatever issues they care about and the participatory media culture and civic emancipation approach that involve a genuine collaboration between professional news organizations and citizen journalists. The primary focus here is on the second perspective of citizen journalists who try to bypass the mainstream media in an effort to frame issues their way. Although there are hundreds of websites dedicated to Nigerian news; only very few generate their own original news content and none arguably does that more than *Sahara Reporters* which describes itself as an online community of international reporters and social advocates dedicated to providing commentaries, features and news reports from a Nigerian perspective. Founded in 2005 by Omoyele Sowore, a Nigerian radical ex-student leader and political dissident who lives in exile in New York, the group comprises of “unapologetic practitioners of advocacy journalism”; “ordinary people with an overriding commitment to seeking the truth and publishing it without fear or favour” (Sahara Reporters.com, 2010). Although it usually covers a diverse range of issues, *Sahara Reporters* focuses primarily on corruption and political skulduggery in Nigeria using mostly anonymous sources to expose the shenanigans of top government officials and powerful people in business. A quick search of its website reveals an amazing and often

detailed amount of information on what powerful Nigerians have stolen, who their accomplices are and where the loot is kept. In sourcing the materials, the site often relies on the help of members of the educated Nigerian Diaspora in the U.S. and Europe and from very disenchanting Nigerians back home who yearn for better governance.

The scoops are largely shielded by U.S. libel laws and in cases where the site has been sued volunteer First Amendment lawyers have aggressively and successfully defended it. This has hugely frustrated Nigeria's political leaders who have repeatedly denounced the site's founder (Sowore) as a "scandal-mongering criminal". The success of the website earned it a \$175,000 grant over the last two years from the Ford Foundation. In exchange for the support, it agreed to set up a formal editorial board and committed to produce "verifiable and accurate news and untainted social commentaries" while still pursuing advocacy journalism. Unlike its early years, *Sahara Reporters* now enjoys a great deal of credibility both in the U.S. State Department and among foreign-service experts. For example, John Campbell, U.S. ambassador to Nigeria in the Bush administration is a regular and finds its reporting "at a very high level of accuracy". According to him, the site is a hit with Nigerians both at home and abroad because no local news organization can do the type of corruption reporting it does without "a bunch of goons" on the payroll of government and business leaders "knocking out the offices and quite possibly murdering one of the principals". The popularity and respect that *Sahara Reporters* now enjoys has even led prominent Nigerian banks and hotels to advertise on the site (Shenon, 2010).

5.7. Subsisting Constitutional and Legislative Challenges for the Press

As already discussed, one very worrying trend in the process of media democratization in Nigeria is the absence of substantive legislative and policy reforms required of a democratic society. Rather than enact new laws based on sound democratic principles, military decrees were automatically renamed acts of parliament without any changes to the spirit or letter of the laws. The bizarre politics around the Freedom of Information bill further underscores this point especially in the light of the fact that the 1999 Constitution does not guarantee the press and the public the right of access to government held information. There are also questions regarding the constitutional responsibility of the press to hold the government accountable. Although

Sections 39 and 22 of the 1999 Constitution requires the press to hold the government accountable, the rights are constrained by other provisions. For example, Section 22 of the Constitution states that “The press, radio, television and other agencies of the mass media shall at all times be free to uphold the fundamental objectives contained in this chapter and uphold the responsibility and accountability of the government to the people”. Similarly, Section 39 states that “every person shall be entitled to freedom of expression, including freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart ideas and information without interference. Without prejudice to the generality of subsection (1) of this section, every person shall be entitled to own, establish and operate any medium for the dissemination of information, ideas and opinions”. But the right is limited by provisions of Sub-section 3 (a) and (b) that states “Nothing in this section shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justifiable in a democratic society: (a) for the purpose of preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, maintaining the authority and independence of courts or regulating telephony, wireless broadcasting, television or the exhibition of cinematographic films; or” (b) “imposing restrictions upon persons holding office under the government of the Federation or of a State, members of the Armed Forces of the Federation or members of the Nigerian Police Force or other Government security service or agencies established by law”.

The right of freedom of expression is further constrained by Section 45 which states that nothing “shall invalidate any law that is reasonably justified in a democratic society: (a) in the interest of defense, public safety, public order, public morality or public health; or (b) for the purpose of protecting the rights and freedom of other persons” ((Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, See also Ogbondah, 2004: 31-2). Nothing in principle is wrong with most of these claw back provisions; but in a country where regime interest is synonymous with national interest, they most likely will be brazenly abused as our analysis has so far shown.

Beside the constitutional impediments is the continued retention of anachronistic laws some of which date back to the colonial period. Three of such legislations readily come to mind: the *Official Secrets Act*, *Sedition*, and *Criminal Defamation*. For example, the *Official Secrets Act of 1962* (a carryover from the colonial regime) is so broad that it criminalizes among other things “entering or being in the vicinity of a protected place; or photographing, sketching or making record of description of protected place or anything situated therein” (See Momoh 2004: 27-8). Several journalists have been charged for

criminal defamation and sedition since 1999 including three editors of *The Insider* magazine who in 2003 were arrested for a story linking then Vice President Atiku Abubakar and other top government officials to bunkering. The court eventually dismissed the case for lack of diligent prosecution.

There has also been a dramatic increase in the number of libel cases against the media since the end of military rule. Between 2000 and 2001, 13 major suits were filed mostly by politicians claiming about N19 billion in damages (Awowede, 2003). In June 2004, roughly after one year in business, *The Sun* was facing N12 billion libel suits most again launched by politicians (Igwe, 2004). Smarting from the damages it paid for some libel suits it did not know about or ignored, *The News* has since instituted a new editorial policy of not publishing any allegations not completely backed by documentary evidence (Onanuga, 2004). While many of the libel suits are frivolous, the cost of defending them in Nigeria's notoriously slow court system can be exorbitant given that some of the cases are filed in places thousands of kilometers away from Lagos where most of the news media is based. Without doubt, the threat of libel will put a chill on investigative reporting especially in a corruption riddled country where it is very difficult to access public documents not to talk of privately held ones. With the military gone, libel apparently is the new Sheriff in town.

Chapter 6.

Broadcasting and Democratization: From State Monopoly to Democratic Pluralism?

6.1. Socio-Political Context of Broadcasting Liberalization

As already discussed in Chapter 2, the critical watershed in Nigeria's rather circuitous march towards democratization came in 1992 when the General Babangida regime abandoned its highly statist 1990 'National Communication Policy' in favor of a more liberalized communication sector. The dramatic shift in policy led to the first incremental steps towards opening up Nigeria's broadcasting and telecommunications sectors to private operators; the print media being largely privately driven dating back to colonial times. The policy shift in broadcasting took effect by way Decree No. 38 of 1992 as amended by Decree No. 55 of 1999 which established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) to regulate all aspects of broadcasting in the country. Responsibility for broadcasting regulation prior to the legislation rested with the Minister of Information although technical matters including the issuance of licenses fell under the purview of the Minister of Communication. The Commission's subsequent licensing of 14 private niche market FM stations in May 1993 marked the end of state monopoly of the sector. This however does not suggest any major diminution of government control of broadcasting as the commission is hardly an independent agency and the state still retains a near monopoly of nationwide (coast to coast) transmission.

Before getting into the institutional framework under which the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) operates, it is necessary to first explore why the Babangida administration drifted towards broadcasting liberalization less than two years after it adopted a 'National Communication Policy' that reinforced state monopoly of broadcasting in the interest of national unity and development. As the most popular medium of mass communication in African, broadcasting has always been coveted by the continent's ruling elite. Reasons for this include the relative cheapness of the

medium, the low level of functional literacy (about 50%), the prevalence of multi-language ethnic groups, and a vast rural-based population (about 80%) (Ziegler and Asante, 1992: 55, van der Veur, 2002: 81-2, Daloz and Verrier-Frechette, 2000, 180-1). As Louise Bourgault (1995: 74) explains, radio broadcasting “permitted elites and governments to talk directly to villages, thereby reorienting existing (pre-colonial) village hierarchies toward the central government”. In Nigeria, it is estimated that radio reaches over 80 per cent of the population (Onwumechili, 2007: 126). For the ruling elites, the control of broadcasting was vital to their consolidation of state power even if such control was often explained in the rather dubious context of development communication, which requires the media to be at the service of the state in its arduous task of nation-building. In Nigeria as in most other African countries, radio is also a very important medium for mutinous soldiers who use it to announce the change of government and mobilize support for their cause.

Not surprisingly, broadcasting in Nigeria remained the exclusive preserve of the government (at both the Federal and State levels) until the early 1990s (see Chapters 1 and 2 for detailed discussion of the evolution of broadcasting in Nigeria). Several interlocking factors—economic, political, and technological—account for the shift towards media liberalization most of which were external and beyond the control of Nigeria’s military rulers of the time. One key factor was the unraveling of communism in the 1980s which not only undermined despots everywhere who had been propped up by the superpowers but actually led to a global push towards multi-party democracy. Similarly, the growing economic crises of that decade also led to widespread disenchantment among the people (Bourgault, 1995: 206-8). In Nigeria for instance, the economy floundered as global oil prices deflated forcing the government to seek help from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Under pressure but at home and abroad, General Babangida had little option than to start a process of political and economic liberalization soon after seizing power in 1985. Another equally critical development was the emergence of new satellite technologies capable of bypassing government censorship and news filters. By the 1980s, the elites in some of Nigeria’s major cities had purchased fixed service satellite (FSS) dish antennas which they used to pirate satellite signals carrying broadcast and cable television programs from Europe (Onwumechili, 2007: 127-8, Bourgault, 1995: 134). Although the technology at the time was only affordable to a few, it undermined government’s control of broadcast

messages. Pursuant to its economic liberalization program, the government in 1988 set up the Technical Committee on Privatization and Commercialization (TCPC). Under the scheme, both the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) were commercialized. In the face of drastically reduced government funding, both corporations not only became even more reliant on advertising but also started the strange practice of charging fees for coverage of non-government news (Bourgault, 1998: 93). Still uncertain about the transition to civil rule program which was rife with manipulation, the Babangida regime in 1990 adopted the statist national communication policy reiterating government monopoly over broadcasting only to have a change of heart in 1992 with the creation of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). In May 1993, the first set of private broadcasters were licensed and roughly a month later Babangida annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential elections plunging the country into a political crises. Amid the political turmoil, General Sani Abacha seized power resulting in five years of even more vicious military rule.

Under Abacha's iron-fisted rule, an interesting political development with respect to broadcasting was the rise of clandestine or pirate radios transmitting on short wave signals. And one such radio deserves particular mention as it further underscored the role played by segments of civil society in the fight to end military rule. *Radio Kudirat* was the brainchild of several prominent pro-democracy campaigners who at the time were in exile. The station first went on air as *Freedom Frequency Radio*. It broadcast initially on 93.4 and later on 99.9 FM for 30 minutes between 7.00 and 7.30 am. In June 1996, it changed its name to *Radio Democrat International* and began transmitting on shortwave between 7.00 and 7.30 am on 7195 KHZ on the 49 Meter Band and on 6.205KHZ also on same band. In 1997, it extended its transmission to an hour between 8.00 and 9.00 pm and changed its name to *Radio Kudirat* in honor of Kudirat Abiola, wife of then incarcerated winner of the annulled election, Chief Abiola. She was assassinated in broad day light by state security agents for her vocal campaign for the release of her husband and the restoration of his electoral mandate.

The idea of a pirate radio was initially developed by Dayo Benson and George Noah, two British based pro-democracy campaigners with background in telecommunications. The radio operation was largely funded with the support of Western governments, private foundations and a blind trust set up for its operation. Other prominent figures who, helped establish and operate the radio include: Nobel Laureate

Professor Wole Soyinka, Retired General Alani Akirinade, Former External Affairs Minister Bolaji Akinyemi, Kayode Fayemi (who runs the London-based Center for Democracy and Development), Bola Tinubu (who later became the Governor of Lagos State) and U.S. based Political Scientist Professor Julius Ihonvbere. The Abacha regime was particularly worried about the radio and did all it could to track its location. Transmission in the popular 'pidgin English' and a number of local languages helped it reach more people. However, it could not broadcast for longer hours due to limited funds and the time it took to get materials ready for transmission given the logistical challenges of a clandestine operation. Yet it offered the campaigners the chance to speak directly with Nigerians who were inundated with propaganda materials from ubiquitous state broadcasters and to a lesser degree the few private broadcasters who were too scared to criticize a brutish regime. Transmitting on short wave also hampered its reception. The Advocacy press who were mostly underground for much of the period along with their exiled editors networked with *Radio Kudirat* particularly in sourcing stories (Olukotun, 2004: 84-96). The station stopped operating shortly after General Abacha's sudden death on June 8, 1998 which paved the way for the return of Nigeria to civil rule on March 29, 1999.

As of August 2010 (11years after the end of military rule and 18 years since the establishment of NBC), there are a total of 402 broadcasting stations in Nigeria. These include 123 private radio stations, 33 private MMDs stations, 13 DTH stations and 233 government (Federal and State) stations. Despite the numbers, has democratization fostered a more democratic broadcasting system in Nigeria? Has the licensing of private operators facilitated political pluralism? Under what regulatory framework does the NBC operate and to what extent is it independent of the government? Put differently, has liberalization truly brought to an end the state's near stranglehold on broadcasting?

Concerned by the State's perennial abuse of broadcasting in Africa, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in partnership with several of the continent's leading media NGOs (including a number of Nigerian NGOs) adopted the *African Charter on Broadcasting* in 2001. The charter demands among other things : the establishment of a three-tier system of broadcasting – public service, commercial and community; guaranteed autonomy for all public authorities involved in broadcasting and telecommunications regulation; a transparent and participatory spectrum allocation and licensing process; the transformation of all government

controlled-broadcasting outlets into truly public service corporations, and the adequate funding of such corporations that is not subject to the shenanigans of some political office holders. With respect to telecommunications, the charter made universal service and access the key conditions for the liberalization of the sector while also urging member-states of UNESCO to prevail on the World Trade Organization (WTO) to recognize broadcasting productions as cultural goods deserving exemption under global trade rules (African Charter on Broadcasting, 2001). In October 2002, provisions of the broadcasting charter were incorporated into the African Commission of Human and Peoples Rights' (ACHPR) "Declaration on Freedom of Expression in Africa". The charter has since become the benchmark for broadcasting reform campaigns all over the continent and was also the centerpiece of the African media NGOs contribution at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva (December 2003) and Tunisia (November 2005). So, how does Nigeria's liberalized broadcasting framework square with the democratic ideals of the African Charter on Broadcasting?

6.2. National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) and the Institutional Framework for Broadcasting Regulation

The National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) was established by Decree 38 of 1992 as amended by Decree of 1999 with powers to regulate all aspects of broadcasting in the country. The act for the first time allowed private ownership of broadcasting in Nigeria which previously was the exclusive preserve of the Federal and State governments. Prior to the establishment of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), broadcasting regulation largely fell under the Wireless Telegraphy Ordinance enacted by the colonial government in 1935 and later amended by the Wireless Telegraphy Act No. 31 of 1961 which prohibited the establishment or use of any station for wireless telegraphy without a license issued for that purpose by the Minister in charge. Decree 38 on August 24, 1992 transferred responsibility for broadcasting regulation from the wireless act to the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC). The functions of the Commission as outlined in the broadcasting code include:

- Receiving, processing and considering applications for the ownership of radio and television stations, including cable television services, direct satellite broadcast and any other medium of broadcasting;
- Regulating and controlling the broadcast industry;

- Receiving, considering and investigating complaints from individuals and bodies corporate regarding the contents of a broadcast and the conduct of a broadcasting station;
 - Upholding the principles of equality and fairness in broadcasting;
 - Establishing and disseminating national broadcasting code and setting standards with regard to the contents and quality of materials for broadcast;
 - Promoting Nigerian indigenous cultures, moral and community life through broadcasting;
 - Regulating ethical standards and technical excellence in public, private and commercial broadcast stations;
 - Determining and applying sanctions including revocation of licences of defaulting stations which do not operate in accordance with the broadcast code and in the public interest;
 - Ensuring qualitative manpower development in the broadcasting industry by accrediting curricula and programmes for all tertiary training institutions that offer Mass Communication and other courses related to broadcasting; and
 - Intervening and arbitrating in conflicts in the broadcasting industry.
- (Nigeria Broadcasting Code, 2002)

Despite the lofty public service ideals outlined above, Decree No. 38 of 1992 (as amended by Decree No. 55 of 1999) (now Act 55) established an agency with little to no regulatory autonomy. This lack of independence is apparent in two key areas: appointment to its board and the actual authority to issue broadcast licenses. The Commission is made up of a chairman and 10 members (including the Director-General) who are appointed by the President on the recommendation of the Minister of Information and can be removed at any time without recourse. Apart from a representative each from the Ministry of Information and the State Security Services (SSS), the other board members are supposed to represent various interests like law, business, education, broadcasting, engineering etc but there is no stakeholders process for nominating representatives and neither is the Minister nor the President required to consult with the sectors to be represented before making an appointment. Not surprisingly, most of the appointees since the end of military rule are either members of the ruling Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) or are somehow linked to people at the highest level of government. The President also has the ultimate authority to issue broadcast licenses with the NBC merely playing an advisory role by recommending applications to him through the Minister. Under the current democratic dispensation, several licenses have been issued to chieftains of the People's Democratic Party (PDP)

or applicants generally considered safe bets (Onwumechili, 2007: 140) with 'potential trouble makers' or those with an independent streak shut out. Fundamentally, the broadcasting commission operates as an extension of the Ministry of Information and is required to take general directives from the Minister in the discharge of its duties with its regulatory decisions also subject to ministerial approval (MRA/Article 19, 2001: 8).

The Commission's apparent lack of autonomy is even more frightening given the broad regulatory power it has over broadcasters. For example, Decree 38 is replete with terms like "public interest" and "national interest" which are never clearly defined or the specific contexts under which they can be invoked. Section 2(1) (n) of the Decree tasks the commission with responsibility of "determining and applying sanctions including revocation of licenses of defaulting stations which do not operate in accordance with the broadcasting code and in the public interest". Similarly, section 8(d) demands the revocation of a station's license "where in the opinion of the Commission the station has been used in a manner detrimental to national interest" (see MRA/Article 19, 2001: 13-4). These provisions are not only vague but also prone to abuse particularly in a country like Nigeria where political power is often highly personalized. Such broad and vague provisions lead to self censorship as potentially critical broadcasters opt to play it safe for fear of losing their licenses. Over the years, several private broadcasters have been warned, fined or sanctioned for violating nebulous sections of the broadcast code especially the provisions dealing with issues of public or national interest. Some of the stations that have been shutdown at some point for seemingly undermining national interest (code for news that the federal government does not like) include Freedom Radio in Kano, African Independent Television and Ray Power FM (both belonging to Daar Communications), Glory FM of Yenagoa, Channels Television among others (Onwumechili, 2007: 131).

The Commission maintains three categories of sanctions for licensed operators who violate either the Decree 38 or the broadcasting code. The first and severest category of sanctions includes revocation of license, immediate shutdown or sealing up of the transmitter and stations, seizure and forfeiture of transmitting equipment, and the suspension of license with a hefty recommencement fee. The second category includes a written warning to rectify the breach within a given time frame, failing which, a fine will be imposed or a reduction of the daily broadcast hour for a given period with recommencement of full broadcast hour with a fine, and suspension of license for a

specific period until recommencement fee is paid. The last category involves a range of smaller fines that increase for every non-compliance with earlier sanctions. Offences under this category include advertisement related breaches and exceeding foreign or religious content limit (MRA/Article 19, 2001: 16-7). The broadcast code indicates the category of sanction under every provision.

The Commission currently issues four types of licences: Radio License (FM/MW/SW), Open Television License (UHF/VHF), Cable License (MMDS) and Direct Broadcast by Satellite (DBS)/Direct to Home (DTH) Satellite Broadcast. Licenses are issued for five years in the first instance and may be revoked if it is not used within two years of issuance. License fees are categorized into A and B according to the economic viability of the area. The Commission conducts public hearings for license renewals but not for the original application process further fuelling suspicion of cronyism. Eligibility criteria under Section 9 of Decree No. 38 includes “an undertaking that the licensed station shall be used to promote national interest, unity and cohesion and that it shall not be used to offend religious sensibilities or promote ethnicity, sectionalism, hatred and disaffection among the peoples of Nigeria”. An applicant is also required “to demonstrate to satisfaction of the Commission that he is not applying on behalf of any foreign interest”. Although the law allows foreigners to participate in the ownership, establishment and operation of broadcasting stations, Nigerian citizens must hold a majority of shares in the company applying for the license. Section 10 of the Decree explicitly bars religious groups and political parties from owning broadcasting stations (MRA/Article 19, 2001).

Since inception, the commission has developed three codes: 1992, 1996 and the current code that came into effect in 2002. A key provision of the code (Section 4.7) is the 60% to 40% ratio between locally produced programs and foreign content—a provision not always rigidly enforced due to the economic challenges facing the industry. However, in April 2009, the Commission declared 7 to 10 every evening ‘Family Belt Time’ during which all terrestrial television providers are required to air local content. Some of the code’s provisions speak to value issues underscoring the largely social conservative nature of the country. For example, Section 3.7.2 under “Good Taste and Decency” states that “the sanctity of marriage and family life must be promoted and strictly upheld”. However, it is not only the Commission who fosters the values of the ‘nanny state’. In 2008, the House of Representatives played the ‘moral cop’ when it

branded the popular reality show 'Big Brother Africa' 'obscene and immoral' and banned its screening in Nigeria. This was despite the fact that the show is delivered only by cable subscription. Under pressure from its customers who were outraged by the ban the cable provider (Multichoice) decided to air the show on opt in basis and was overwhelmed by the demand for it (Haruna, Godwin (2008)).

As to be expected, several of the Commission's regulatory decisions have generated controversies especially within the broadcast industry. One of those was the decision in 2004 to ban the live retransmission of foreign news programs which it argued could undermine national interest and security (Onwumechili, 2007: 131). The decision outraged several local broadcasters who find live retransmission a cheap way to fill airtime. But the ban was not new regulation as the Commission was merely enforcing a provision of the broadcast code which it had up to that point largely ignored. According to Section 5.1.4 of the code "a terrestrial station shall not relay foreign news content directly. This does not preclude the universal practice of using excerpts for news, whose duration shall not exceed three minutes". Section 5.1.5 further states that "delayed broadcast of news and related programmes from foreign stations shall be permitted only when scripts are re-written and voiced locally". Another major controversy centred on the Commission's 2004 decision to enforce the ban on miracle broadcast. According to Section 4.4.7 of the code "a programme promoting religion in any form, shall present its claims, especially those relating to miracles, in such a manner that it is provable and believable" (National Broadcasting Code, 2002). The operative words here are 'provable' and 'believable', in other words a scientific verification that a miracle had indeed occurred. The Nigerian economy which had been perennially depressed since the 1980s led to an explosion of miracle churches—big and small—such that miracle broadcasting became a major source of revenue for broadcasters who vehemently opposed the ban claiming it was not their job to ascertain the veracity of miracles. But the commission was not persuaded insisting it has a responsibility to ensure that the airwaves are not used to propagate fraudulent miracle claims (Okpani, Ikenna Emeka, 2004).

Another major issue of contention is the wildly different license fees the Commission has for private broadcasters and the state-owned corporations. In response to the intense criticism of the discriminatory policy, the Commission marginally increased the license fees for State owned broadcasters but not by much, to actually bridge the

gap with what it charges private operators. The most recent available figures for terrestrial broadcasting indicate that while government-owned stations pay a flat fee of N2.5 million (about \$20,000) for a five year license, private operators (relative to the market) pay between N7.5 and N20 million (\$56, 000 to \$150,0000) also for a five year license (Onwumechili, 2007: 140). Critics of NBCs discriminatory license fee policy argue that it makes it very difficult for private broadcasters to be commercially viable given the challenges facing the industry and as a result undermines the public interest in getting information and ideas from a wide range of sources (MRA/Article 19, 2001: 12).

Although Nigeria is not short of wealthy applicants keen on getting into broadcasting, the high license fees would certainly discourage potential applicants with more altruistic motive of using broadcasting to advance the common good. The discriminatory license fees along with other decisions by the Commission help reinforce the perception that it favours State broadcasters, particularly the two Federal corporations: the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN). For example, early in 2000, Channels Television, a leading private broadcaster obtained the right to broadcast in Nigeria the European soccer championship (Euro 2000) from TV Africa, an international broadcast content supplier based in South Africa. The Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) had also secured the right to broadcast the event from another source. The NBC intervened and gave the local transmitting right to the NTA arguing that TV Africa was not registered with it and as a result its programs could not be retransmitted in Nigeria. The ruling defied logic for a number of reasons chief among which is that no provision in either the NBC Decree or Code requires foreign content providers to register with the Commission. Besides, the NTA itself regularly retransmits all types of programs from various international vendors and broadcasters none of which is registered with the NBC. In another case just weeks before the Sydney 2000 Olympic Games, the NBC through a press statement and paid advertisements in major newspapers warned that the African broadcast rights for the games had been given to the Union of Radio and Television Nations (URTNA) and that only URTNA members in Nigeria would have the right to broadcast it. The NTA is the URTNA member in Nigeria and the Commission's press statement and paid advertisement advised stations wishing to transmit the games to negotiate with the local URTNA affiliate which is the NTA. The above cases among others have raised questions about the Commission's role as an impartial arbiter of conflicts within the broadcast

industry (MRA/Article 19, 2001: 15-6). Private broadcasters have since formed the Independent Broadcasters Association of Nigeria (IBAN) in part to help advance broadcast policies that reflect their interests. However, most of their members believe that the NBC is either incapable or unwilling to fully exert its regulatory authority on the two big federal corporations even as it over scrutinizes the private operators. This unfortunately has led to the persistence of government broadcasting in which the two federal corporations remain largely the mouthpiece of what Nigerian's derogatorily refer to as A.G.I.P—"Any Government In Power".

6.3. Nigerian Television Authority (NTA), the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) and the Persistence of Government Broadcasting

Both the Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) and the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) were created in the late 1970s when the Federal military government scrapped the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) splitting its television and radio services between the two corporations (see Chapters 1). Although Decree No. 24 which created the NTA was promulgated in 1977, it was made retroactive to 1976 when the corporation began operations. The Decree which became the Nigerian Television Authority Act following the return to civil rule in 1979 gave the NTA exclusive rights over television broadcasting in Nigeria. NTAs monopoly power over television broadcasting remained in effect until the creation of the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) in 1992. The Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN) was established courtesy of Decree No. 8 of 1979. Like the NTA legislation, it was also made retroactive, this time, to April 1, 1978 when the corporation began operations. The FRCN Decree which also became an act of parliament upon the return of civil rule in 1979 formally repealed the Nigerian Broadcasting Corporation Ordinance of 1956. Section 6 of the legislation granted the corporation exclusive powers to broadcast simultaneously in more than one State of the Federation at any one time on either short or medium wave bands. As a result, all the other radio stations not owned by the federal government were required to restrict the reception of their services to the geographic confines of their states. Section 22(1) of Decree 38 of 1992 which established the National Broadcasting Commission (NBC) repealed the exclusivity authority over radio broadcasting that the FRCN hitherto had. The FRCN mandate required that it among other things, provide as a public service

in the interest of Nigeria, independent and impartial radio broadcasting services meant for general reception and to ensure that the totality of its service adequately reflects not only the unity of the Nigerian Federation but also the culture, characteristics, affairs and opinions of each state or other parts of the federation” (MRA/Article 19: 23-4). The mandate of the NTA is similarly worded only replacing the word ‘radio’ with ‘television’

Both the NTA and the FRCN have similar management structures. In the case of the NTA, the Authority consists of the Chairman, the Director-General, one representative of the Federal Ministry of Information, one person to represent women’s organizations, and six others with experience in the following areas: the mass media, management, education, finance, engineering and arts and culture. The members are to be appointed by the National Council of Ministers (which under the current democratic dispensation is the Federal Executive Council) on the recommendation of the Minister with responsibility for broadcasting (i.e. Minister of Information). Similarly, the FRCN’s governing body consists of a chairman, the Director-General, a representative each of the Federal Ministry of Information and the Ministry of External Affairs, one person to represent women’s interest and six other persons with relevant experience in the following areas: the mass media, education, management, finance, engineering, arts and culture. The Chairman, Director-General and other board members are appointed by the Minister with the approval of the National Council of Ministers (MRA/Article 19, 2001: 24-6).

Both the NTA and the FRCN were set up ostensibly to provide independent, non-partisan public service broadcasting as their mandates suggest. But the legislative framework under which, they operate make that absolutely impossible. In the case of the NTA, not only does the Minister have the authority to hire and fire board members, the legislation also empowers him to give directives of either a general or specific nature to the Authority and obliges the authority to comply with such directives. Further, the power to make regulations for the Authority rests with the National Council of Ministers, not its board. Similarly, the FRCN Act specifically requires the corporation to broadcast, as desirable in the public interest, the speeches of members of both the Armed Forces Ruling Council (during the military era), and the National Council of Ministers (currently the Federal Executive Council). Such speeches, it goes on to explain, may include statements of fact, explanations of government actions or policies or matters of any other kind. The Act also requires the FRCN to broadcast any government program upon

the request of a public officer authorised to do so by the president, at its own expense. Further, it authorises the Minister to determine how special programs meant either specifically for schools or for general reception should be broadcast. The last amendment to the act; the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Amendment) Decree No. 14 of 1991 enhanced the powers of the Minister over the Corporation. While the old act provided that the Minister could not give the corporation directives on particular, individual, or specified cases or incidents, the amendment stipulates that the Minister may give the FRCN directives not only of a general character but also relating to particular matters regarding the exercise by the Corporation of its functions, and that the Corporation must comply with such directives (MRA/Article 19, 2001: 28-30).

Roughly 11 years after the end of military rule, both the NTA and the FRCN remain largely the mouthpiece of the Federal Government and the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). Worse still, there does not seem to be any appetite from government officials and lawmakers to amend these military era statutes that have incapacitated both corporations from doing anything even remotely close to the type of broadcasting their mandate demands. Curiously, only the NBC has the statutory powers to sanction both corporations. But the NBC is also under the seemingly ubiquitous powers of the Minister of Information. Besides, what would the Commission sanction them for? Helping the Minister do his/her job of promoting the government? Add to that the fact that all the three agencies rely on the Ministry of Information for their budgetary allocations and it becomes more evident how hopeless the situation is. Any major impact of liberalization on both the NTA and the FRCN is probably in the area of entertainment programming as they innovate to try to keep pace with private broadcasters. For now, public service is dead; long live government broadcasting.

6.4. Private Broadcasters: Walking the Straight and Narrow Path

Unlike government broadcasters, especially at the federal level, whose enabling laws, more or less constrain them to tow the official line, often in violation of key provisions of the broadcasting code, private broadcasters do not have any such codified restrictions. On the contrary, the liberalization of broadcasting in 1992 was expected to open up the airwaves and foster greater democratic pluralism and citizen engagement in public life. According to Section 1.4.0(c) of the broadcasting code, broadcasting should

serve as “a forum for the exchange of comment and criticism representing every stratum of society, as required in a federal state like Nigeria, in which the views and opinions of everyone should be included in the national consensus” (National Broadcasting Code, 2002). This however, has hardly been the case especially with respect to potentially contentious public affairs issues. Two key but interlocking reasons account for this; the entrenched deferential culture of broadcasting brought about by a patrimonial state’s monopoly of the medium, and the authoritarian political climate under which private broadcasting emerged.

As already observed, the first private broadcasting licenses were issued in May 1993. Roughly a month later, General Babangida annulled the June 12, presidential elections which plunged Nigeria into a massive political crises. General Sani Abacha seized power amid the political turmoil and ran what unarguably is the most vicious regime in Nigeria’s history. Under his iron-fisted rule, the nascent private broadcasting industry largely towed the official line. Although many of the private operators did not necessarily cheerlead for him the way the NTA and the FRCN did, they were not critical either. Unfortunately, since the return of civil rule in 1999, not much has changed with respect to robust critical public affairs discourse in the broadcast media. While government broadcasters at both the federal and state levels have continued to bat for their bosses, the private operators have largely embraced a safety first approach especially in the light of several contentious and vague provisions of the broadcast code that allude to conduct detrimental to national interest or the broadcast of information leading, or likely to lead to a breakdown of law and order. The NBC has also been more aggressive in enforcing the broadcast code among the private broadcasters than with their state counterparts. This has resulted in a pervasive culture of self-censorship among the private operators who primarily have a commercial motive for getting into broadcasting and would not risk having their licenses revoked (Abati, 2004). The censorships often come by way of choice of topics and issues to be aired, how such issues are framed and potentially ‘safe’ guests to be used. Guests with critical streaks when invited are reminded in advance that certain topics or issues are off limit. Reuben Abati, a prominent public affairs commentator and chairman of the editorial board of the influential Guardian newspaper who is a regular guest on television reveals that many of the stations are usually not comfortable when he becomes critical of government and “If they know you are a firebrand and too critical for their liking, they won’t invite you back”.

According to Abati, the plea not to be too critical of government either comes with the original invitation or shortly before going on air. Edetaen Ojo of the Media Rights Agenda (MRA) agrees:

I think that they are under a lot of pressure. In some cases, they try to resist. In many cases, they knuckle under. I have had direct experience and I have had colleagues who have had direct experience of going for an interview and before the program starts, you are asked not to talk about certain things..... And you're supposed to be going into a studio for a discussion. So you can see; there are certain issues they are pressured not to talk about. And it is really quite easy for them to be pressured because you've got a government controlled regulator that can suspend you; that can withdraw your license and impose fines, or in some other ways punish you if you go against what government wants. But you have had some cases where they have been resistant and they have taken the NBC to court....I think that there is a lot of pressure. Sometimes they feel that they can try and deal with it and sometimes they don't.

(Ojo, 2004)

Such delicate balancing also involves phone-in programs which are usually pre-screened to weed out potentially problematic calls.

The rather uneasy relationship between private broadcasters, at least those of them interested in hard news and rigorous public affairs commentary and the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC) is perhaps best illustrated with the September 2008 closure of Channels Television, an award-winning private station founded by John Momoh, one of Nigeria's most iconic television personalities who for decades was the face of NTAs network news. Channels Television had on September 16, 2008 ran a story that Nigeria's sick president, Umaru Musa Yar'Adua may resign which happened not to be true. Hackers had somehow gained access to the website of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) and posted the material online in exactly the same format the news agency uses. Apart from Channels TV, a number of foreign stations also ran the story including the Agence France Presse (AFP), the BBC World Service and the BBC Hausa Service all citing the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) as their source. But within 10 minutes of the original broadcast, while monitoring the Reuters News channel, Channels Television saw a refutation of the story by the President's spokesperson and immediately retracted it. It did so all afternoon and evening while also apologizing for the mistake. But that was not enough to prevent heavily armed State Security Agents from descending on both the Abuja and Lagos offices of the station later that day where staff were arrested and detained and computers and tapes carted away. The security agents

also besieged the premises of the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN). Without any investigations into the circumstances of the incident, the NBC immediately suspended the license of the station. Justifying the suspension in a statement, the Director-General of the Commission, Yomi Bolarinwa, stated that the decision was in consonance with the provisions of paragraph 8 (d) of the Third Schedule of the NBC Act No. 38 of 1992 (as amended) and paragraph 13.3.3.1 (g) of the National Broadcasting Commission Code which states that a station's licence may be revoked by the commission in a number of circumstances including " where in the opinion of the Commission, the station has been used in a manner detrimental to national interest" or where the "licensee broadcasts information immediately leading, or likely to lead, to a breakdown of law and order in the country". The station was reopened after about a week.¹⁴

A major impact of broadcasting liberalization is unarguably in the enhanced services and diversity of options it has generated particularly in the area of entertainment programming. Beside, intense competition from private operators appears to have jolted government broadcasting corporations from their monopoly induced lethargy and dourness. Prior to deregulation, a typical weekday television schedule began at 4 pm. Ray Power Radio and African Independent Television (AIT), two of the first private stations to be licensed in 1992 introduced early morning telecasts (6 am) and soon after started round the clock transmission. This forced government stations at federal and state levels to dramatically expand their hours of operation (Olorunnisola and Akanni, 2005: 106).

Another consequence of liberalization is a shift towards specialization as stations try to carve niches in an increasingly competitive market. Examples include Brilla FM (sports), Spectrum FM and Channels Television (news and public affairs), Atlantic FM (French Language), Murhi (Islamic religious programming). Yet others like Ray Power FM, Cosmo FM, Cool FM and Rhythm FM among others have embraced popular music as their defining identity (Onwumechili, 2007: 133, Abati, 2004). Liberalization has also dramatically expanded Nigerian's access to foreign media. For decades the only foreign

¹⁴ While the official claim is always that the NBC does its work with no interference, a top official of the commission told the research that they are always under intense pressure from top government officials to go after stations that may have made critical broadcasts about government officials. This was during the authoritarian reign of former President Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007).

programming available to Nigerians, were short-wave radio broadcasts from stations like the BBC, Voice of America among others. Now licensed cable providers like Multichoice and Trend Television offer a wide range of foreign and local satellite channels to a growing client base of middle class Nigerians at about a monthly rate of between N2000 and N8000 (about \$15 to \$60) (Onwumechili, 2007: 135). Conversely, the licensing of local satellite broadcasting companies like Minaj Broadcasting Systems, African Independent Television (AIT) among others has extended the reach of Nigerian homemade programming to foreign markets. In the United States, AIT broadcasts live on Telstar 5 satellite. However, in 2005 it joined the Nigerian Television Authority among the list of channels offered by Comcast, major U.S. major cable provider (Onwumechili, 2007: 135-6). One major consequence of liberalization is the now ubiquitous presence of foreign, mostly American programs on Nigerian media. These range from movies, music, cartoons, comedy, sports and more. Worse still, private broadcasters neither have the resources nor feel any obligation to combat it as buying the foreign programs are by far cheaper than producing local ones so long as they manage to meet the 60% to 40% local Vs foreign content threshold required by the broadcasting code. Besides, such foreign programs are very popular and help their bottom line. Prior to liberalization, 95% of the programs by the government owned NTA were locally produced. With fast diminishing market shares, it has increasingly shifted to foreign programming to make itself more competitive. An example was its decision to use the foreign "Touched by an Angel" in its Sunday prime night slot (Onwumechili, 2007: 138).

To help arrest the trend, the NBC has, since April 2009, declared 7 to 10 every evening as 'Family Belt Time' during which all terrestrial television stations must air local content.

6.5. Community Radio: The Big Elephant in the Room

One of the arguably most sensitive yet least discussed issues with respect to media liberalization in Nigeria is community radio. The *African Charter on Broadcasting* discussed earlier identified Community broadcasting as the third tier of a system made up of the public service and commercial models. And it defines community broadcasting as that "which is for, by and about the community, whose ownership and management is representative of the community, which pursues a social development agenda, and

which is non-profit” (cited in Ojebode and Akingbulu, 2009: 212). Unfortunately, neither Decree 38, of 1992 which liberalized broadcasting in Nigeria nor the Commission’s first code recognized community broadcasting. That was however rectified in the 2002 code which under Section 2.4 recognized “its immense benefits to communal life” and set out the following, among others, as the conditions for its operation shall be community based with program content that cater to the communal needs and key operators who shall as much as possible, be members of the community. Section 2.5 of the code also recognizes campus (college) broadcasting which it describes as a form of community broadcasting.

However, with little action on the part of the government to actualize community broadcasting, a civil society led campaign on the issue began in 2003. Led by the Institute for Media and Society (IMS) in partnership with the Panos Institute for West Africa and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters, the coalition started with about 10 individuals and organizations and grew to over 200. Its primary goal is to educate the public on the importance of community radio and to get the government to put in a place a reasonable framework that would facilitate its actualization. For example, it demanded a different licensing regime for community radios that reflects their not for profit status. The campaign continued into 2006 and appeared to be gaining traction both with the government and the public. That year, the Minister of Information set up a special working group which developed a comprehensive policy framework for community radio in Nigeria. The report covered such key areas like licensing, funding, and monitoring of community radios. The Ministry of Information took the document to its policy committee, the National Council on Information, which adopted it. But as it eagerly waited for the first community radios to be licensed on the basis of its advocacy work, the government instead issued licenses to 8 campus radios. Utterly disappointed, the coalition protested to the government explaining that the primary focus of its community radio advocacy has been rural or grassroots community radio, not campus radios. Nonetheless, the coalition decided to help train the staff of the eight campus radio stations while waiting for the ‘real’ community radios to be licensed. That never happened. The change of government in March 2007 literally brought to an end the coalition’s four year advocacy work on the issue. The new regime has shown no interest in revisiting the issue with sources in the Ministry of Information claiming that the policy document actually went missing (Ojebode and Akingbulu, 2009). An eerie reminder of

the Freedom of Information advocacy campaign discussed in Chapter 3. In June 2009, the Director-General of NBC Yomi Bolarinwa put a spin on the issue when he argued that licenses granted to institutions of higher learning could be regarded as experimental community broadcasting stations since campuses are actually communities in their own rights (National Broadcasting Commission, 2010(a)).

As at October 2010, the message under the community broadcasting section of the NBC website reads:

The National Broadcasting Commission recognises Community Radio as part of Community Broadcasting, recognised by the African Charter on Broadcasting as the third tier of broadcasting. The Commission recognises it as a key agent of democratisation for social, cultural and economic development. It is a non-profit, grassroots public broadcast service medium through which community members are able to contribute and foster civic responsibility and integration. The Commission is working with the government to establish a proper framework for the licensing of Community Broadcast Stations, such that they shall be truly owned and controlled by the community.

(National Broadcasting Commission, 2010b)

Eighteen years after the Commission was established and eleven years into the civilian administration, the Nigerian government remains very apprehensive of genuine community radios, not decentralized government propaganda outlets. While it has not admitted it, at least not publicly, the government is gravely concerned about the state security implications of such radios which it fears could very easily be used to mobilize the masses against the ruling classes. But such paranoia is not borne out by the evidence from several neighboring West African countries where there have been an explosion of community radios in the last decade or so. By 2006, Mali had 120 community radios, Senegal 44, Burkina Faso 27, Niger Republic 24, Republic of Benin 22, and Ghana 8 (Dada, 2007). The frustration of the Nigerian community radio advocacy coalition is best captured by Ojebode and Akingbulu (2009: 216):

given the high level of illiteracy in Nigeria, a situation that prevents the majority from patronizing the newspaper, the indescribably poor state of electricity power supply, a situation that forecloses the use of television for most Nigerians—as well as the inability of the regional and commercial stations to cater to the needs of the rural communities—it is difficult to imagine participation of the majority of Nigerians in the democratic process without a radio that speaks their language and expresses their needs and aspirations.

With no community radios and state broadcasters still genuflecting before their political matters, the challenge of fostering genuine democratic pluralism through broadcasting falls on the private operators who aside from the commercialist imperatives of being primarily a for-profit undertaking also have to watch over their shoulders all the time. As already observed, the biggest impact of liberalization is the explosion in entertainment programming, mostly foreign that come from all types of broadcasters: terrestrial, satellite and cable. The situation is certainly a big improvement from when Nigerians were subjected to the endless propagandist monologue of the government broadcaster. But as media theorist Daniel Hallin (1998: 162) warns:

if we are to place democracy at the center of media research, it follows that we must focus simultaneously on power. Who has access to the media, what interests they serve, how they handle social plurality—all of these things are shaped by the structure of power; and if democratization is to take place, it will necessarily involve a transformation of that structure.

With respect to broadcasting liberalization and democratization, Nigeria is certainly a long, long way from achieving these ideals.

Chapter 7.

Conclusion

7.1. Media Democratization in Nigeria: Quo Vadis?

Nigeria's eventual return to civil rule in May 1999 after decades of military despotism brought with it great expectations regarding the prospects of substantive political liberalization and media democratization. Roughly 11 years later, what has been the impact of neoliberal democratization on the Nigerian media? Put simply, what has fundamentally changed, if any, from the years of military rule? The answer decidedly is not much. For one, the print media remain as diverse, vibrant, irrepressible and as critical as it has ever been with the exception of the moribund government press which used to be prevalent in the 1970s. In contrast, broadcasting despite the licensing of private stations, remain largely compliant and on a tight leash of what can at best be described as a 'democratic' leviathan¹⁵ state.

Evidently, this study, like much of African media scholarship reflects the liberal critique of an overreaching state. It is not hard to see why that is the case. However that should not be confused with an endorsement of the market alternative that liberalism espouses as private capital is as much complicit as the state in using the media to advance its own interests. A much more reasonable alternative in the light of Africa's peculiar sociopolitical and economic situation is a social democratic model reflected in the 1991 Windhoek Declaration adopted by African NGOs in partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The declaration which primarily sought to end state repression of the press in Africa by fostering an 'independent, free and pluralistic press' defined an independent press as "a press independent from governmental, political or economic control or from control of materials

¹⁵ John Keane (1991) had used the term "democratic Leviathan" in a slightly different political context.

and infrastructure essential for the production and dissemination of newspapers, magazines and periodicals”. It similarly defined a pluralistic press as “the end of monopolies of any kind and the existence of the greatest possible number of newspapers, magazines and periodicals reflecting the widest possible range of opinion within the community” (Windhoek Declaration, 1991). While the 1991 declaration focused exclusively on the print media, it promised to reconvene another conference where with a view to applying the same ideals to broadcasting given its immense power in the continent. The 2001 African Charter on Broadcasting (discussed in Chapters 3 and 5) is the product of that promise. Its key demands include a three-tier system of broadcasting (public service, commercial and community), guaranteed independence for all public authorities involved in broadcasting and telecommunication regulation, a transparent and participatory spectrum-allocation and licensing process, the transformation of all government-controlled broadcasting corporations into truly public service outlets and adequate public funding of such stations that is not subject to the whims of government officials. Despite its lofty public service ideals, for lack of a better term, I call this the “orphan model” of broadcasting in Africa as no country is keen on going down that route¹⁶ (Aginam, 2005: 128).

The challenge clearly is how to move these exciting articulations into the policy arena and even more importantly, getting an obdurate and self-serving state to embrace them. This evidently has been the case in Nigeria. As Robert White argues, the first goal of an inclusive national communication policy is to ensure that all segments of the population have some capacity to communicate to the others and to the nation as a whole and that all groups can access their information needs. And such a policy if geared towards lasting peace and steady processes of development must ensure that “those with less education, less capital resources, less communication competence and less cultural definition also have access”. In effect, the acid test of such a policy is “whether it opens up communication access to rural areas, to minority cultural groups, to the poor and the marginal...those who live on the edge of existence...” (White, 1999: 479). Nigeria’s post-military media policies do not even get close to these ideals given its undeclared yet strident opposition to community radios so vital for grassroots

¹⁶ Both Windhoek Declarations, 1991 for the press and 2001 for broadcasting, endorse a social democratic media framework that is not beholden to the state or private capital.

development and empowerment. But it begs the question: does the state truly want the people to be empowered?

As already observed, the elitist nature of Nigeria's current democratization has led to the selective application of neoliberal policies based on the enlightened self interests (primarily political and economic) of the ruling elite. For example, why telecommunication as the economic honey pot has been fully deregulated, broadcasting so vital to substantive democratization largely remain under the stranglehold of the state who true to tradition continue to abuse it for political ends. Since whoever controls the airwaves controls political power, broadcasting is one medium no Nigerian government is willing to relinquish complete control over no matter how pro-market that government may be.

A second disturbing trend in the post-military phase of Nigeria's democratization is the abject lack of substantive policies, legislations and regulations required of a democratic society. All the laws and regulatory frameworks currently in place, with the exception of the 2003 National Telecommunications Act, were military era legislations and institutions with absolutely no changes to their spirit or letter. They automatically became Acts of parliament with the end of military rule in 1999. This amounts to what political theorists call transition without consolidation. Theorists of developmental democracy like Richard Sklar (1996) have however taken issues with the transition – consolidation schema arguing the democratization is not necessarily linear but sometimes comes in incremental and disjunctive bits. While that's a very valid point, there at least need to be signs that those baby steps are being taken and the Nigerian experience so far does not bear that out. If there are any hopeful signs, it is the belief that the NGOs will keep pushing for a more democratic media system despite their failures so far with respect to such high profile campaigns as the access to information legislation and the community radio project. Unfortunately, the masses are so preoccupied with the daily challenges of living to be bothered about media policies which largely remain an elitist issue. The Nigerian media system is in urgent need of substantive regulatory, institutional and legislative reforms to facilitate active participation in governance and development. But will the state or better the regimes budge on those? Only time will tell.

References

- Abati, Reuben (2004) Chairman, Editorial Board, Guardian Newspapers, Lagos-Nigeria. (Personal Interview, May 16, 2004).
- Abayomi, Silas (2003) "Government-Media Relationship from 1960-2000" in *Issues in Nigerian Media History: 1900-2000 AD*, eds. Ralph Akinfeleye and Innocent Okoye. 105-119. Lagos; Nigeria: Malthouse Press.
- Adebanjo, Adegbenro (2001) "The Journey so Far", Tell Magazine, April 16, 2001.
- Adekson, Adedayo (2004) *The 'Civil Society' Problematique: Deconstructing Civility and Southern Nigeria's Ethnic Radicalization*. New York: Routledge.
- Adeoye, Wole (2004) Chairman, Journalists for Democratic Rights (JODER), Lagos, Nigeria. Personal Interview; June May 15, 2004.
- Adogamhe, Paul G (2003) "The Politics of State Creation and Ethnic Relations in Nigeria: The Case of Former Bendel State" In *Emancipating Cultural Pluralism*. 195-214. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Africa.com (n.d.). Map of Nigeria (<http://www.africa.com/nigeria/map>) Retrieved December 21, 2010.
- African Charter on Broadcasting (2001) (<http://www.misa.org/broadcasting/brochure.pdf>) Retrieved June 4, 2009.
- Agbaje, Adigun (1992) *The Nigerian Press, Hegemony, And the Social Construction of Legitimacy: 1960-1983*. Lewiston; New York: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Aginam, Arthur-Martins (2008) "Neoliberalism, Nongovernmental Organizations, and Communication in Sub-Saharan Africa" In *Global Communications: Towards a Transcultural Political Economy*, eds. Paula Chakravartty and Yuezhi Zhao, 243-261. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Aginam, Arthur-Martins (2005) "Media in 'Globalizing' Africa: What Prospect for Democratic Communication?" In *Democratizing Global Media: One World, Many Struggles*, eds. Robert Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao, 121-142. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ahluwalia, Pal (2001) *Politics and Post-Colonial Theory: African Inflections*. London: Routledge.
- Ainslie, Rosalynde (1967) *The Press in Africa*, New York: Walker & Company.
- Ajibade, Kunle (2003) *Jailed for Life: A Reporter's Prison Notes*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Heinemann Books.

- Ake, Claude (1996) *Democracy and Development in Africa*. Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institute.
- Ake, Claude (1995) "The Democratization of Disempowerment in Africa" In *The Democratization of Disempowerment: The Problem of Democracy in the Third World*, ed. J. Hippler, 70-89. London: Pluto.
- Ake, Claude (1993a) "Is Africa Democratizing?" The 1993 Annual Guardian (Newspapers) Lecture, Lagos, Nigeria, December 11.
- Ake, Claude (1993b) "Rethinking African Democracy" In *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, eds. Larry Diamond & M. Plattner, 70-82. Baltimore: John Hopkins.
- Ake, Claude (1985) "The Nigerian State: Antinomies of a Periphery Formation" In *The Political Economy of Nigeria*, ed. Claude Ake, London: Longman.
- Ake, Claude (1979) *Social Science as Imperialism: The Theory of Political Development*, Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press.
- Akinkuotu, Ayodele (1999) "Tell and the Abacha Transition" In *The Media, Transition and Nigeria*, ed. Tunji Oseni. 131-139. Lagos, Nigeria: Toson Consult.
- Allan, Stuart (2009) "Histories of Citizen Journalism" In *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*, ed. Stuart Allan and Einar Thorsen, 17-31. New York: Peter Lang.
- Allan, Stuart (2005) "Introduction" In *Journalism: Critical Issues*, ed. Stuart Allan. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Allan, Stuart (2004) *News Culture*. Berkshire, England: Open University Press.
- Ali, Tarik (2006) "When NGOs are More of a Bane than a Blessing", Taipei Times (www.taipeitimes.com/News/editorials/archives/2006/04/2003301976).
- Altschull, Herbert J (1984) *Agents of Power: The Role of the News Media in Human Affairs*. New York: Longman.
- Ang, Ien (1996) *Living Room Wars: Rethinking Media Audiences for a Postmodern World*. New York: Routledge.
- Appadurai, Arjun (1996) *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Arnold, Guy (1977) *Modern Nigeria*. London: Longman.
- Arogundade, Lanre (2004) Coordinator, International Press Center, Lagos. Personal Interview, April 10, 2004.
- Artz Lee and Yahya Kamalipour eds. (2003) *The Globalization of Corporate Media Hegemony*. New York: State University of New York.
- Awowede, Onorlode (2003) "Media Record N19bn Libel Cases in Two Years" Punch (Newspaper) January 28, 2003; p. 33.

- Aziken, Emmanuel and Shaibu Inalegwu (2008) "Mark Gives Benchmark for Passage of FOI"—Adefaye says Bill is not to Benefit Media Alone" —www. Nigerianguildofeditors.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=58:mark-gives-benchmark-for-passage-of-foi-ade-faye-says-bill-is-not-to-benefit-media-alone&catid=1:latest-news&Itemid=61, Retrieved January, 5, 2010.
- Babawale, Tunde ed. (2003) *Urban Violence, Ethnic Militias and the Challenges of Democratic Consolidation*. Lagos, Nigeria: Malthouse Press.
- Baker, Gideon (2002) *Civil Society and Democratic Theory: Alternative Voices*. London: Routledge.
- Bayart, Jean-Francois (1986) "Civil Society in Africa" In *Political Domination in Africa: Reflections on the Limits of Power*, ed. Patrick Chabal. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bell, Martin (1998) "The Journalism of Attachment" In *Media Ethics*, ed. Mathew Kieran, 15-22. London: Routledge.
- Biel, Robert (2000) *The New Imperialism: Crisis and Contradictions in North-South Relations*. London: Zed Books.
- Biersteker, Thomas & Peter M. Lewis (1997) "The Rise and Fall of Structural Adjustment in Nigeria" In *Transition Without End: Nigerian Politics and Civil Society Under Babangida*, eds. Larry Diamond et al. 303-331. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Blake, Cecil (1997) "Democratization: The Dominant Imperative for National Communication Policies in Africa in the 21st Century". *Gazette* Vol. 59 (4-5): 253-269.
- Blankson, Isaac, A (2007) "Media Independence and Pluralism in Africa: Opportunities and Challenges in Africa" In *Negotiating Democracy: Media Transformations in Emerging Democracies*, eds. Isaac Blankson and Patrick Murphy, 15-33. Albany: State University of New York.
- Boyd-Barrett, Oliver (2007) "Alternative Reframing of Mainstream Media Frames" In *Media on the Move, Global Flow and Contra-Flow* ed. Daya Thussu, 201-220. London: Routledge.
- Bourgault, Louise, M (1998) "Nigeria: The Politics of Confusion" In *The Media and Political Transitions*, ed. Patrick H. O'Neil, 79-101. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Bourgault, Louise M (1995) *Mass Media in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Blomington: Indiana University Press.
- Brooten, Lisa (2005) "The Power of Public Reporting: The Independent Media Center's Challenge to Corporate Media" In *Bring 'Em On: Media and Politics in the Iraq War*, eds. Lee Artz and Yahya Kamalipour, 239-254. Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Burgh, Hugo de (2005) "Introduction: Journalism and the New Cultural Paradigm" In *Making Journalists: Diverse Models, Global Issues*, ed. Hugo de Burgh, 1-21. London: Routledge.

- Calabrese, Andrew (2004) "Toward a Political Economy of Culture" In *Toward a Political Economy of Culture: Capitalism and Communication in the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Andrew Calabrese and Colin Sparks, 1-12. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Chabal Patrick (1992) *Power in Africa: An Essay on Political Interpretation*. London: Macmillan.
- Chadha, Kalyani & Anandam Kavori (2005) "Globalization and National Media Systems: Mapping Interactions in Policies, Markets and Formats" In *Mass Media and Society*, eds. James Curran & Michael Gurevitch. 84-103. London: Hodder Arnold.
- Chalaby, Jean (1998) *The Invention of Journalism*. London: Macmillan.
- Chazan, Naomi, Peter Lewis, Robert Mortimer et al (1999) *Politics and Society in Contemporary Africa*. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Chossudovsky, Michel (1997) *The Globalization of Poverty: Impacts of IMF and World Bank Reforms*. London: Zed Books.
- Code of Ethics for Nigerian Journalists (2008)
http://www.nigerianguildofeditors.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=47&Itemid=56 (Retrieved June, 11, 2010)
- Christians, Clifford (1995) "Communication Ethics as the Basis of Genuine Democracy" In *The Democratization of Communication*, ed. Philip Lee, 75-91.
- Chua, Amy (2004) *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*, New York: Anchor Books.
- Cresswell, John (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*. London: Sage.
- Curran, James (2002) *Media and Power*. London: Routledge.
- Dada, John (2007) 'Nigeria' in *Global Information Society Watch*, www.giswatch.org/gisw2007/node/544. Retrieved June 20, 2008.
- Daloz, Jean Pascal & Katherine Verrier-Fechette (2000) "Is Radio Pluralism an Instrument for Political Change: Insights from Zambia" In *African Broadcast Cultures: Radio in Transition*, eds. Richard Fardon and G. Furniss, 180-187. Oxford: James Currey.
- Dare, Sunday (1999) "Media in for a Rough Ride", Interview with Odi Ofeimun in *The Fourth Estate* (Magazine) May/June 1999.
- Dare, Sunday (1998) "Guerilla Journalism in Nigeria", *The Nation*, (U.S) May 18, 1998.
- Deuze, Mark (2009) "The Future of Citizen Journalism" In *Citizen Journalism: Global Perspectives*, ed. Start Allan & Einar Thorsen. 255-264.

- Diamond, Larry (1995) "Nigeria: The Uncivic Society and the Descent into Praetorianism" In *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences*, eds. Larry Diamond et al, Boulder: Lynne Reinner.
- Dirlik, Arif (1994) "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism, *Critical Inquiry* 20, 328-356.
- Downing, John (2003) "Radical Media and Globalization" In *The Globalization of Corporate Media Hegemony*, eds. Lee Artz and Yahya Kamalipour, 283-293. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Downing, John (2002) "Independent Media Centres: A Multi-local, Multi-media Challenge to Global Neo-liberalism" In *Global Media Policy in the New Millennium*, ed. Marc Raboy, 215-232. Luton: Luton University Press.
- Echeruo, Michael, J.C. (1977) *Victorian Lagos: Aspects of Nineteenth Century Lagos Life*. London: Macmillan.
- Edeani, David (1985) "Press Ownership and Control in Nigeria" In *Mass Communication, Culture and Society in West Africa*, ed. Frank O. Ugboajah, 44-62. World Association for Christian Communication/Hans Zell.
- Elegalem, P.O. (1985) "Economic Factors in the Development of Mass Communication in Nigeria" In *Mass communication, Culture and Society in West Africa*, ed. Frank O. Ugboajah op cit. 63-73.
- Eko, Lyombe, S (2003) "Between Globalization and Democratization" Governmental Broadcasting in Africa" In *Public Broadcasting and the Public Interest*, eds. Michael P. McCauley et al, 175-191. Armonk, NY: M.E. Sharpe.
- Ekpu, Ray (1999) "The Nigerian Press and Transitions" In *The Media, Transition and Nigeria*, ed. Tunji Oseni. 55-68. Lagos, Nigeria: Tosen Consult.
- Falk, Richard (1999) *Predatory Globalization: a Critique*. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.
- Elias, T.O. (1969) "Legal Requirements for Publishing a Newspaper" In *Nigerian Press Law*, ed. T.O. Elias. 1-15. London: Evans.
- Falola, Toyin (1999) *The History of Nigeria*. Westport: Greenwood Press.
- Ferguson, James (2006) *Global Shadows: Africa In Neoliberal World Order*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Foreign and Commonwealth Office (2010) "Nigeria: Country Information". (<http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/travel-advice-by-country/country-profile/sub-saharan-africa/nigeria/?profile=all>) Retrieved October 10, 2010.
- Freedom of Information Coalition (2009) www.foicoalition.org) Retrieved December 15, 2009.
- Friedman, Thomas L. (2005) *The World is flat: A brief history of the twenty-first Century*. New York: Farar, Straus and Giroux.
- Golding, Peter & Philip Elliott (1979) *Making the News*. London: Longman.

- Govil, Nitin (2007) "Bollywood and the Frictions of Global Mobility" In *Media on the Move: Global Flow and Contra-flow*, ed. Daya Thussu, 84-97. London: Routledge.
- Gross, Peter (2002) *Entangled Evolutions: Media and Democratization in Eastern Europe*, Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press.
- Grugel, Jean (2002) *Globalization: A Critical Introduction*. Basingstoke: Palgrave
- Hall, John (1995) "In Search of Civil Society" In *Civil Society: Theory, History, Comparison*, ed. John Hall, 1-31. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Hallin, Daniel (2000) "Broadcasting in the Third World: From National Development to Civil Society" In *Media, Ritual and Identity*, eds. Tamar Liebes & James Curran, 153-167. London: Routledge.
- Hamelink, Cess (1983) *Cultural Autonomy in Global Communications: Planning National Information Policy*. New York: Longman.
- Hannerz, Ulf (1992) *Cultural Complexity: Studies in Social Organization of Meaning*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Haruna, Godwin (2008) "Subscribers Besiege Multichoice over BBA", *Thisday Newspaper*, August 27, 2008.
- Harvey, David (2005) *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David (2003) *The New Imperialism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harvey, David (1989) *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Blackwell Publishing.
- Hachten, Williams & James Scotton (2002) *The World News Prism: Global Media in an Era of Terrorism*. Iowa State University Press.
- Hachten, William A (1993) *The Growth of Media in the Third World: African Failures, Asian Successes*, Iowa State University Press.
- Hackett, Robert and Yuezhi Zhao (1997) *Sustaining Democracy: Journalism and the Politics of Objectivity*. Toronto: Garamond Press.
- Held, David & Anthony McGrew (2002) *Globalization/Anti-Globalization*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Herbst, Jeffery (1992) *U.S. Economic Policy Toward Africa*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations Press.
- Herman, Edward and Robert McChesney (1997) *The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Global Capitalism*. London: Cassell.
- Hesmondhalgh, David (2002) *The Cultural Industries*. London: Sage.
- Hibou, Beatrice, ed. (2004) *Privatizing the State*. Trans. Jonathan Derrick. New York: Columbia University Press.

- Hirst, Martin and Roger Patching (2007) *Journalism Ethics: Arguments and Cases*. Oxford University Press.
- Hoogvelt, Ankie (2001) *Globalization and the Postcolonial World: The New Political Economy of Development*. Basingstoke: Palgrave.
- Horwitz, Robert (2001) "‘Negotiated Liberalization’: The Politics of Communications Sector Reform in South Africa" In *Media Globalization: Why the State Matters*, eds. Nancy Morris & Silvio Waisbord, 37-54. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Hyden, Goran & Charles Okigbo (2002) "The Media and the Two Waves of Democracy" In *Media and Democracy in Africa*, eds. Goran Hyden, M. Leslie & F. Ogundimu, 29-53. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.
- Ibelema, Minabere (2003) "The Nigerian Press and June 12: Pressure and Performance during a Political Crisis", *Journalism Monographs*, Vol. 4 No. 4 (Winter 2003).
- Igiebor, Nosa (2004) Editor-in-Chief Tell Magazine (Personal Interview, April 25, 2004).
- Igwe, Dimgba (2004) Deputy-Editor-Chief of The Sun Newspaper, Personal Interview, Lagos-Nigeria, May 21, 2004.
- Iwabuchi, Koichi (2007) "Contra-flows or the Cultural Logic of Uneven Globalization: Japanese Media in the Global Agora" In *Media on the Move: Global flow and Contra-flow*, ed. Daya Thussu, 67-83. London: Routledge.
- Jenkins, Rob (2001) "Mistaking 'Governance' for Politics: Foreign Aid, Democracy and the Construction of Civil Society" In *Civil Society: History and Possibilities*, eds. S. Kaviraj & S. Khilnani, 250-268. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Joseph, Richard (1993) "Africa: The Rebirth of Political Freedom" In *The Global Resurgence of Democracy*, eds. L. Diamond & M. Plattner, 307-320. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Joseph, Richard (1987) *Democracy and Prebendal Politics in Nigeria: The Rise and Fall of the Second Republic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Kasoma, Francis (1997) "The Independent Press and Politics in Africa", *Gazette* Vol. 59 (4-5): 295-310.
- Kavoori, Anandam (2007) "Thinking through Contra-flows: Perspectives from Post-colonial and Transnational Cultural Studies" In *Media on the Move* op cit.
- Keane, John (1998) *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
- Keane, John (1996) *Reflections on Violence*. London: Verso.
- Keane, John (1991) *The Media and Democracy*. Cambridge; MA: Blackwell.
- Keeble, Richard (2005) "Journalism Ethics: Towards and Orwellian Critique" in *Journalism: Critical Issues*, ed. Stuart Allan. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

- Kim, Youna (2007) "The Rising East Asian 'Wave': Korean Media go Global" In *Media on the Move* op cit.
- Kraidy, Marwan (2005) *Hybridity, or, the Cultural Logic of Globalization*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Krishnaswamy, Revathi (2008) "Postcolonial and Globalization Studies: Connections, Conflicts, Complicities" In *The Postcolonial and the Global*, eds. Revathi Krishnaswamy & John C. Hawley. 2-21. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press.
- Mackay, Ian (1964) *Broadcasting in Nigeria*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Ibadan University Press.
- Maduabuchi, Emma (2010) "Uncertain Times in Daily Times"; (<http://allafrica.com/stories/201002090232.html>); Retrieved March, 10, 2010.
- Mamdani, Mahmood (2001) "Beyond Settler and Natives as Political Identities: Overcoming the Legacy of Late Capitalism" In *Ideology and African Development*, eds. P.I. Ozo-Eson & U. Ukiwo, 2-22. Port-Harcourt, Nigeria: Center for Advanced Social Sciences.
- Mamdani, Mahmood (1996) *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary and the Legacy of Late Capitalism*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Mamdani, Mamood (1995) "Introduction" In *African Studies in Social movements and Democracy*, eds. M. Mamdani & E. Wamba-dia-Wamba, 1-34. Dakar, Senegal: CODESRIA.
- Marcus, R.R, Mease, K & Ottemoeller, F (2001) "Popular Definitions of Democracy from Uganda, Madagascar, and Florida, U.S.A" *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 36, 113-132.
- Martin, Robert (1998) "Notes on Freedom of Expression in Africa" In *The Media and Political Transitions*, ed. Patrick O'Neil, 63-77. Boulder: Lynne Rienner.
- Martin-Barbero, Jesus (1993) *Communication, Culture and Hegemony: From Media to Mediations*. London: Sage (trans. Elizabeth Fox and Robert White)
- Mattelart, Armand (2000) *Networking the World, 1794-2000*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. (trans. Liz-Carey-Libberecht & James Cohen)
- Mattelart, Armand (1983) *Transnationals and the Third World: the Struggle for Culture*. South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey (trans, David Buxton)
- Mbembe, Achille (2001) *On the Postcolony*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- McChesney, Robert (2002) "The Global Restructuring of Media Ownership" in *Global Media Policy in the New Millennium*, ed. Marc Raboy, 149-162. Luton: University of Luton Press.
- McLuhan, Marshall (1964) *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New York: MacGraw-Hill,
- McMillin, Divya (2007) *International Media Studies*. Malde, Mass.: Blackwell.

- McNair, Brian (2005) "What is Journalism"? In *Making Journalists: Diverse Models, Global Issues*, ed. Hugo de Burgh. 25-43. London: Routledge.
- McPhail, Thomas (2006) *Global Communication: Theories, Stakeholders, and Trends*. Oxford, U.K.: Blackwell.
- Media Rights Agenda (MRA) (2003) *Campaigning For Access to Information in Nigeria: A Report of the Legislative Advocacy Programme for the Enactment of a Freedom of Information Act*. Lagos, Nigeria: Media Rights Agenda.
- MRA/Article 19 (2001) *Broadcasting in Nigeria: Unlocking the Airwaves* (Report on the Framework for Broadcasting and Telecommunications in Nigeria), Lagos: Media Rights Agenda.
- Meyrowitz, Joshua (1986) *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Mojeed, Musikilu (2002) "A Parliament of Ideas", *Tell Magazine*, November 11, 2002.
- Momoh, Tony (2004) *Nigerian Media Laws and Ethics*. Lagos; Nigeria: Efua Media Associates.
- Monga, Celestin (1996) *The Anthropology of Anger: Civil Society and Democracy in Africa*. Trans. Linda L. Fleck and Celestin Monga; Boulder; Colorado: Lynne Rienner.
- Mosco, Vincent (1996) *The Political Economy of Communication: Rethinking and Renewal*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Mowoe, Isaac J (1999) "Contending Theories in African Politics in the era of Globalism, Media Pluralism, and Democratic Culture" In *Mass Communication, Democracy and Civil Society in Africa: International Perspectives*, ed. Luke Uka Uche, 103-115. Lagos, Nigeria: Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO.
- MRA, 2008(a) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/foisetback1.html) Retrieved December 8, 2009.
- MRA, 2008(b) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/nigscondemn.html) Retrieved December 7, 2009.
- MRA, 2008(c) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/mrmonitor/mar_2008/foiweb.html) Retrieved December 8, 2009.
- MRA, 2008(d) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/senateplan.html), Retrieved December 4, 2009.
- MRA, 2008(e) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/press_release_29_08_08.html) Retrieved December 5, 2009.
- MRA, 2007(a) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/obasanjorefuses.html) Retrieved December 10, 2009.
- MRA, 2007(b) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/foisign.html). Retrieved December 10, 2009.

- MRA, (1999) (www.mediarightsagenda.org/pressaug_99.html) Retrieved December 1, 2009.
- Mustapha, A Raufu (2004) "Ethnicity and the Politics of Democratization in Nigeria" In *Ethnicity and Democracy in Africa* eds. Bruce Berman et al. 257-275. Oxford: James Currey.
- Nain, Zaharom (2000) "Globalized Theories and National Controls: The State, the Market, and The Malaysian Media" In *De-Westernizing Media Studies*, eds. James Curran and Myung-Jin Park. 138-153. London: Routledge.
- National Mass Communication Policy (1990) Federal Republic of Nigeria.
- National Broadcasting Commission (NBC), 2010(a), <http://www.nbc.gov.ng/highlight.php?id=11>- (Retrieved September 5, 2010)
- National Broadcasting Commission, (NBC), 2010(b) <http://www.nbc.gov.ng/broadcast.php?menu=2&submenu=6> (Retrieved September 5, 2010).
- National Council on Privatization (2000) *Privatization Handbook*, Ibadan; Nigeria: Spectrum Books.
- National Telecommunications Policy (2000), Federal Republic of Nigeria (September 2000).
- Nigeria Broadcasting Code (2002), Abuja; Nigeria: National Broadcasting Commission.
- Nigerian Press Council (2010) (http://www.presscouncil.gov.ng/journal_institute2.php) Retrieved June 11, 2010.
- Nigerian Press Council (1999) Enabling Law: NPC Decree No. 60 of 1992 and NPC (Amendment) Decree No. 60 of 1999.
- Nederveen Pieterse, Jan (2004) *Globalization of Empire?*. New York: Routledge.
- Obadare, Ebenezer (2004) "In Search of the Public Sphere: The Fundamentalist Challenge to Civil Society in Nigeria" *Patterns of Prejudice* 38 (2) 177-198.
- Obe Taiwo (2000) "Making of the Media Council Decree (1986-1991)" in *History of the Nigerian Press Council*, eds. Ralph Akinfeleye et al. 40-50. Abuja; Nigeria: Nigerian Press Council.
- Obi, Cyril (2001) *The Changing Forms of Identity Politics in Nigeria Under Economic Adjustment: The Case of Oil Minorities Movement of the Niger Delta*. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Odunewu, Alade (1999) "A Farewell to Transition?" In *The Media, Transition and Nigeria*, ed. Tunji Oseni op cit. 277-288.
- Ofeimun, Odia (1999) "Transition '86, '95 and '98" In *The Media, Transition and Nigeria*, ed. Tunji Oseni. 35-53. Lagos, Nigeria: Tosen Consult.
- Offor, Joseph I (2002) *Community Radio and its Influence in the Society: The Case of Enugu State—Nigeria*. Frankfurt: IKO-Verlag fur Interkulturelle Kommunikation.

- Ogbondah, Chris W (2004) *State-Press Relations in Nigeria (1993-1998): Human Rights and Democratic Development*, Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books.
- Ogbondah, Chris W (1997) "Communication and Democratization in Africa: Constitutional Changes, Prospects and Persistent Problems for the Media" *Gazette* Vol. 59 (4-5): 271-294.
- Ogbondah, Chris W (1994) *Military Regimes and the Press in Nigeria, 1966-1993: Human Rights and National Development*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America.
- Ojebode, Ayobami & Akin Akingbulu (2009) "Community Radio Advocacy in Democratic Nigeria: Lessons for Theory and Practice", *Ecquid Nova: African Journalism Studies*, Vol. 30 (2): 204-218.
- Ojo, Emmanuel (2003) "The Mass Media and the Challenges of Sustainable Democratic Values in Nigeria: Possibilities and Limitations". *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 25: 821-840.
- Ojo, Edetaen (2004) Executive Director, Media Rights Agenda (MRA), Personal Interview, June 5, 2004.
- Okpani, Ikenna Emeka (2004) "Why FG Banned Miracle Broadcast" (<http://allafrica.com/stories/200404260720.htm>)- Retrieved August, 5, 2009.
- Olorunnisola, Anthony and Tunde Akanni (2005) "Nigeria" in *Global Entertainment Media: Content, Audiences, Issues*, Mahwah; New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Olorunyomi, Dapo (1999) "Defiant Publishing" In *The Media, Transition and Nigeria*, ed. Tunji Oseni op cit. 232-239.
- Olukoshi, Bayo (1998) *The Elusive Prince of Denmark: Structural Adjustment and the Crisis of Governance in Africa*. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet
- Olukotun, Ayo (2004) *Repressive State and Resurgent Media under Nigeria's Military Dictatorship, 1988-1998*. Uppsala, Sweden: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.
- Omang, Ojang (2000) "Nigerian Press Council's Selected Adjudications" in *History of the Nigerian Press Council*, eds. Ralph Akinfeleye et al. 146-205. Abuja; Nigeria: Nigerian Press Council.
- Omole, Godwin (2000) "The Nigerian Press Council: 1992-1998" in *History of the Nigerian Press Council*, eds. Ralph Akinfeleye et al. op cit. 51-66.
- Onanuga, Bayo (2004) Managing Director, The News Magazine, Personal Interview, June 1, 2004.
- Onanuga, Bayo (1999) "The News and the Abacha Transition" In *The Media, Transition and Nigeria*, ed. Tunji Oseni, 141-150. Lagos, Nigeria: Toson Consult.
- Ong, Aihwa (2006) *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Onwumechili, Chuka (2007) Nigeria: Equivocating While Opening the Broadcast Liberalization Gates” In *Negotiating Democracy: Media Transformations in Emerging Democracies*, eds. Isaac Blankson and Patrick Murphy. 123-142. Albany: State University of New York.
- Ottaway, Marina (2000) “Social Movements, Professionalization of Reform and Democracy in Africa” In *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, eds. M. Ottaway & T. Carothers, 77-103. Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Perez-Diaz, Victor M (2003) *The Return of Civil Society: The Emergence of Democratic Spain*. MA: Harvard University Press.
- Robinson, William I (1996) *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention, and Hegemony*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sandbrook, Richard (2000) *Closing the Circle: Democratization and Development in Africa*. Toronto: Between the Lines.
- Saul, John R. (2005) *The Collapse of Globalism and the Reinvention of the World*. Canada: Viking.
- Saul, John (1997) “Liberal versus Popular Democracy,” *Review of African Political Economy*, 73: 339-353.
- Schmitz, Gerald (1995) “Democratization and Demystification: Deconstructing ‘Governance’ as Development” In *Debating Development Discourse: Institutional and Popular Perspectives*, eds. D.B. Moore & G.J. Schmitz, 54-90. London: Macmillan.
- Schiller, Dan (1999) *Digital Capitalism: Networking the Global Market System*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Schiller, Herbert (1976) *Communication and Cultural Domination*. White Plains, N.Y.: International Arts and Sciences Press.
- Scholte, Jan A (2000) “Global Civil Society” In *The Political Economy of Globalization*, ed. Ngaire Woods, 173-201. London: Macmillan.
- Schudson, Michael (1978) *Discovering the News*. New York: Basic Books.
- Shohat, Elle (1993) “Notes on the ‘Post-Colonial’ ” *Social Text*, 31/32, 99-113.
- Shennon, Philip (2010) “Africa’s Wikileaks” (<http://www.thedailybeast.com/blogs-and-stories/2010-08-12/sahara-reporters-uncovering-nigerias-corruption/>), Retrieved August 10, 2010.
- Sklar, Richard (1996) “Towards a Theory of Developmental Democracy” in *Democracy and Development: Theory and Practice*, ed. Adrian Leftwich. Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press.
- Sobowale, Idowu (1985) “The Historical Development of the Nigerian Press” In *Mass Communication, Culture and Society in West Africa*, ed. Frank O. Ugboajah. 27-35. World Association for Christian Communication/Hans Zell.

- Soyinka, Wole (1996) *The Open Sore of a Continent: A Personal Narrative of the Nigerian Crisis*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sparks, Colin (2000) "Introduction: The Panic over Tabloid News" in *Tabloid Tales: Global Debates Over Media Standards*, eds. Colin Sparks and John Tulloch. 1-40. Boulder: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Steger, Manfred (2009) *Globalisms: The Great Ideological Struggle of the Twenty-first Century*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Steger, Manfred ed. (2004) *Rethinking Globalism* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Stiglitz, Joseph (2002) *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co.
- Suberu, Rotimi (2001) *Federalism and Ethnic Conflict in Nigeria*. Washington, D.C.: Institute of Peace Press.
- Suberu, Rotimi (1994) "The Travails of Federalism in Nigeria" In *Nationalism, Ethnic Conflict and Democracy*, eds. Larry Diamond, M. Plattner, Baltimore: John Hopkins.
- Tettey, Wisdom (2001) "The Media and Democratization in Africa: Contributions and Constraints of the Private Press", *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 23: 5-31.
- The Committee to Protect Journalists (1999) *Outliving Abacha: Six Nigerian Journalists' Prison Stories*, New York: CPJ.
- Thussu, Daya K. (2007) ed. *Media on the Move: Global flow and Contra-flow*. New York: Routledge.
- Thussu, Daya K. (2006) *International Communication: Continuity and Change*. London: Hodder Education.
- Thussu, Daya K. (1998) ed. *Electronic Empires: Global Media and Local Resistance*. London: Arnold.
- Tomlinson, John (1991) *Cultural Imperialism: A Critical Introduction*. London: Pinter.
- Tumber, Howard and Marina Prentoulis (2005) "Journalism and the Making of a Profession" In *Making Journalists: Diverse Models, Global Issues*, ed. Hugo de Burgh, 58-74. London: Routledge.
- Tunstall, Jeremy (1977) *The Media are America*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Umoren, Rose (2001) *Economic Reforms and Nigeria's Political Crisis*. Ibadan, Nigeria: Spectrum Books.
- Uzodike, Ufo O (1997) "Democracy and Economic Reforms: Developing Undeveloped Economies" In *Democracy and Democratization in Africa: Towards the Twenty-First Century*, ed. E. Ike Udogo. 21-38. Leiden: E.J. Brill.
- Van der Veur, Paul R. (2002) "Broadcasting and Political Reform" In *Media and Democracy in Africa*, eds. G. Hyden et al, 81-105. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers.

- Waisbord, Silvio & Nancy Morris (2001) "Introduction: Rethinking Media Globalization and State Power" In *Media and Globalization: Why the State Matters*, eds. Nancy Morris & Silvio Waisbord. vii-xvi. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Wasko, Janet (2004) "The Political Economy of Communications" In *The Sage Handbook of Media Studies*, eds. John Downing et al, 309-329. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Weaver, David H (2005) "Who are Journalists"?. In *Making Journalists: Diverse Models, Global Issues*, ed. Hugo de Burgh. 44-57. London: Routledge.
- White, Robert A (1999) "Media Deregulation, Free Press and Cultural Pluralism in Africa: Towards a Communication Policy" in *Mass Communication, Democracy and Civil Society in Africa: International Perspectives*, ed. Luke Uka Uche. 477-497. Lagos; Nigeria: Nigerian National Commission for UNESCO.
- Woods, Ngaire (2000) "The Political Economy of Globalization" In *The Political Economy of Globalization*, ed. Ngaire Woods, 1-19. London: Macmillan.
- Zhao, Yuezhi & Robert Hackett (2005) "Media Globalization, Media Democratization: Challenges, Issues, and Paradoxes" In *Democratizing Global Media: One World, Many Struggles* eds. Yuezhi Zhao & Robert Hackett. 1-33. Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Ziegler, D & Molefi Asante (1992) *Thunder and Silence: The Mass Media in Africa*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press.
- Zelizer, Barbie (2005) "The Culture of Journalism" In *Mass Media and Society*, eds. James Curran and Michael Gurevitch, 198-213. London: Hodder Arnold.